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Perspectives

A MAGAZINE FOR MEMBERS OF THE ASSOCIATION OF FRATERNITY/SORORITY ADVISORS

VITAL VOICES:

A RAW LOOK AT GRADUATE STUDENT PERSPECTIVES

aPerspectives

A MAGAZINE FOR MEMBERS OF THE ASSOCIATION OF FRATERNITY/SORORITY ADVISORS

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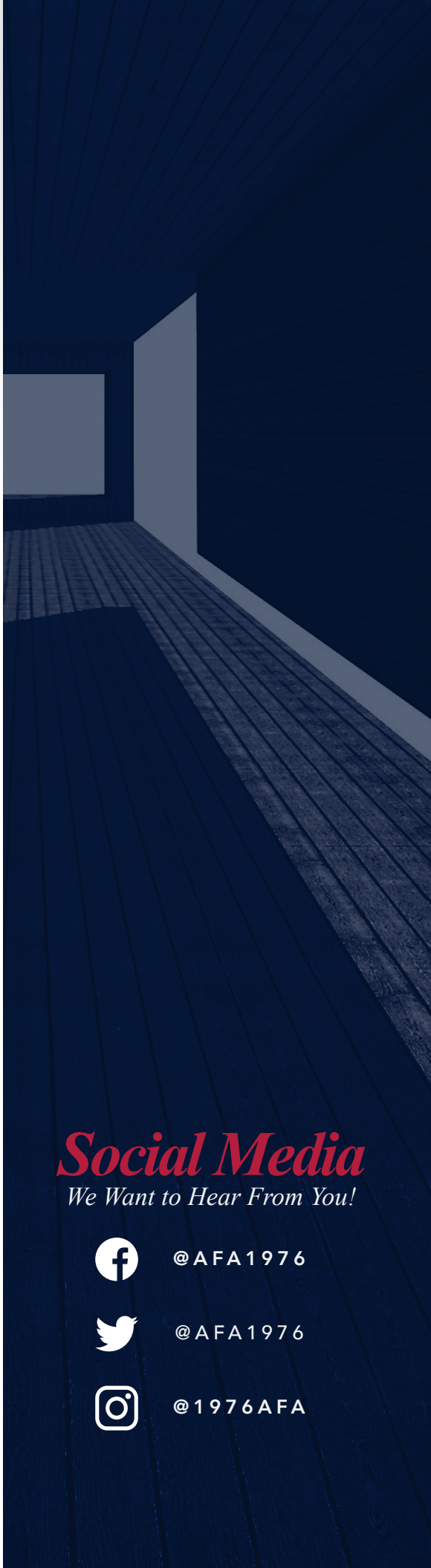

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FROM THE EDITORS

It is just Noah joining you for this issue's Letter from the Editor. I am wrapping up my tenure as the Editor for Perspectives. Twenty-five-year-old Noah never would have envisioned serving as co-editor for a publication (some of my journalism professors likely envisioned this to an even lesser degree). I owe this to the efforts of several friends who challenged me to realize that I was not, in fact, too cool to get involved, and perhaps rather than making snide comments from the stands I should actually get in the game. I am thankful my support network pushed me out of my comfort zone. I have found the AFA volunteer experience to be a profoundly developmental opportunity. I have been challenged both personally and professionally. Specifically serving as co-editor has been one of the most rewarding and intensive learning experiences of my career.

I do not offer this solely as a walk down memory lane. I also do not just seek to thank my colleagues who tolerated younger Noah's self-indulgent and ridiculous hot takes while they channeled my energy into productive action. Rather, in my last opportunity to share a thought through this forum, I offer up something that made an impact in my career, and it could potentially do the same for yours. Take a chance and put your self out there. Be willing to fight through the insecurity. Let your ideas be discussed. Raise your hand. I recognize this can sound a bit like a stale commencement speech; however, that does not make it untrue. Our challenges require substantive and meaningful engagement. We need more than call outs and applause lines. We need innovation and hard work.

We must also embrace the imperfection of this process. You might write an article that does not age well, and your session submission might not be accepted. Not all of my ideas have been brilliant, and every volunteer role has not been profound. Yours won't be either; however, some will be, and it is through the process of putting our ideas out into the world and giving new things a try that we figure it out. It is through the collective efforts of our entire community bringing forward ideas and vetting them through our discourse that we will find the solutions for our future and the leaders to make them happen.

In conclusion, I ask you allow me a brief personal privilege to thank the people who have stepped up over the last several years and joined me on this journey. I am certain the two talented co-editors I have partnered with in this work, Emiliee Danielson-Burke and Brooke Goodman, would agree that AFA has dedicated and passionate volunteers. We have been fortunate to work with many of them through the Perspectives editorial board.

In addition, there are two incredibly talented individuals who really make this publication what it is. They are Andrea Starks-Corbin, AFA's director of marketing and communications, and Justin England, our graphic designer. They are not always the most visible because they let us volunteers spend more time in front of the camera. However, now seems as good a time as any to point out how valuable they are to creating the product that lands in your inbox. I hope our members can appreciate the talent we have on our staff and the value they provide for us all.

I know Andrea and Justin, along with the rest of the staff, will continue to provide the backbone that carries our publication forward as they work with the next editorial team. As such, I will enjoy the opportunity to see how the new editors of Perspectives, Ryan Miller and Tyler Havens, guide the publication into the future. This duo will bring new voices and the fresh ideas to ensure the magazine remains relevant, compelling, and serves as a forum to help us in meeting the challenges of our profession. I assure you there are good things ahead. I will be excited to open up the next issue, pour a cup of coffee, and appreciate their work.

Noah Borton
AFA Perspectives Editor

Letter from the President

Wendi Kinney

Gratitude. According to Psychology Today "Studies show that people can deliberately cultivate gratitude and there are important social and personal benefits to doing so." Further, "the emotion generates a climate of positivity that both reaches inward and extends outward." People who express gratitude are demonstrated to experience a reduction in negative outcomes such as pain, stress, insomnia, and perform better at work and school. Individuals on the receiving end of acts of appreciation experience these positive outcomes as well.

Practicing gratitude is not new, though I certainly see an increase in the frequency of such expressions at certain times of the year, such as the beginning of a new year, milestone birthdays, and Thanksgiving. There are many ways to foster gratitude. Some chose to journal, meditate, or write thank you notes. Some pass it on through acts of kindness. When I think about a gratitude practice an image of a circa 1990's Oprah enters my mind. She has a long history of keeping a gratitude journal, something she has encouraged her readers and viewers to join her in doing. And while the 20 (plus!) years ago me didn't jump on that bandwagon, I have made a more concerted effort to take stock of the things I am grateful for since becoming a spouse, mother, supervisor, and leader. So today I wish to express my gratitude for the incredibly hard-working editors of Perspectives, for the top-notch editorial team, and each individual who has authored or collaborated on an article this past year. Nothing about 2020 has been typical or felt constant. However, Perspectives has continued to reach my mailbox to provide timely and thought-provoking pieces that advance my understanding of the fraternal industry and our work. At a time when we all have been tugged in a million directions, working overtime to keep ourselves, our families, and our students safe, stretching budgetary dollars at work and at home, and dealing with the weight of the uncertainties of these times, the editors, editorial team, and writers showed up to further the professional development of their peers. I have immense gratitude for them and their voluntary work.

Thank you Noah, Brooke, Brittany, Meredith, Katherine, Annie, Tyler, Andrew, Ashly, Jamison, Kyle, Kyle, Ryan, McKenzie, and Lindsay.

Thank you, writers.

"I live in the space of thankfulness — and for that, I have been rewarded a million times over. I started out giving thanks for small things, and the more thankful I became, the more my bounty increased. That's because — for sure — what you focus on expands. When you focus on the goodness in life, you create more of it."

— Oprah Winfrey

What's Your Perspective?

Regardless of if you work or volunteer on a campus, for an inter/national organization, or a company, you've likely found yourself managing the middle.

A 2017 Harvard Business Review article titled "Why Being a Middle Manager Is So Exhausting" states:

> *"Middle managers, however, are expected to play very different roles when moving from one interaction to the next, alternating between relatively high and relatively low power interaction styles. By virtue of their structural positions, they are simultaneously the "victims and the carriers of change" within an organization, receiving strategy prescriptions from their bosses above and having to implement those strategies with the people who work beneath them. As a result, middle managers often find themselves stuck in between various stakeholder groups, which can produce "relentless and conflicting demands."*

We also know power dynamics — based on employment structure, identities held, workplace culture, or length of time in a role — can make it more difficult to manage the middle.

Tell us about a time you had to navigate the description of "middle manager" described above. Were you successful or unsuccessful? What skills or strategies did you employ to support stakeholders in all directions, with varying needs? How did you maintain balance for yourself? What did you learn?

Alex Kennedy

Delta Tau Delta Fraternity

Director of Undergraduate Education

In September 2020, I wrapped up my first 90 days at not only a new job but also one with a new responsibility: managing. I'm quite certain there's a learning curve for everyone who finds themselves in that predicament, and I just so happened to also check that off my list during a pandemic. In that time, I've learned some things about management and myself. A few specifics come to mind:

1. Be tough on standards but tender on people. The work we do isn't easy and that is especially true during a pandemic impacting our work at every turn. Care about your people while still holding them accountable to expectations.

2. EQ (emotional intelligence) beats IQ, in almost every instance. The work we do involves people. The way you supervise requires you to understand the needs of those below and above you. Anyone can learn the tactical components of a job, but can you successfully navigate complex stakeholder systems?

3. Your team's wins and losses are equally yours. At the end of the day, you're responsible for the success of your team. That is all fine and good if the team excels, but when it falters you must take ownership of your part in the failure. This is where assessing you and your team's risk inclination comes into play. There are times when the risk of failure is too catastrophic and times when risk benefits your employees.

4. To thy own self be true. You were hired or promoted to manage people because someone saw the necessary skills and capabilities to do so in you. There is an interconnected nature between confidence and competence. You need to know yourself well enough to say, "these are things I must work on" and "these are my strengths I need to lean into." No one is perfect, but we should know ourselves well enough to lean on our strengths.

For a few years, I had a silly professional goal of becoming a manager before turning 30 (made it with a few months to spare). I had an idealized concept of what supervision would look like. Truth be told, in some ways it's exactly how I imagined. In other ways it's light-years different.

Mónica Lee Miranda, Ph.D.

University of South Florida

Director, Center for Student Involvement

> *"You're no good to anyone else if you're no good to yourself."*

"You're no good to anyone else if you're no good to yourself" is a phrase the staff I'm honored to work with hears often and ad nauseum. I say it often because it is one of the truest statements I share and commit to on a daily basis. You see, in my opinion, one of my greatest successes as a middle manager is prioritizing my own self-care over anything else called work.

The work isn't going anywhere, my friends. It will be there the day after today, the day after tomorrow, and the day after that. Unless it is a true emergency and someone is injured, at risk of injury, or sadly,

dead, nothing is truly emergent. Our work is not rocket science, although many who are not in our field may think so. Don't misunderstand me — I'm not recommending you disregard your daily responsibilities. I would never do that. I have too much integrity and work ethic to have anyone ever question my ability and effectiveness at my job. I am, however, strongly recommending you put those daily responsibilities in perspective and manage them effectively, while ensuring you have the capacity to complete them efficiently.

In September, I took every Friday off. Some might give me side-eye for that during one of the busiest months of the year (especially during a global pandemic) and with four vacancies on staff during a university-wide hiring pause. Yet, that extra day and the long weekends were exactly what helped me be more productive from Monday to Thursday than I would have been otherwise. The complete logging off of the computer on Thursday nights was the greatest blessing and gift, not only to myself, but also to the team I am responsible for leading.

You see, that's the other key to success. While we are called middle-managers, we do better, and more efficient and effective work, if we are actually middle-leaders. When we manage, we do more than we need and obstruct the team we lead from doing their work independently, utilizing you and your guidance, advising, and coaching as needed. Logging off the computer for three full days helped me completely decompress, rest my eyes, my brain, and most of all, my soul. It also let the team, and my supervisors, know I was doing what I needed to be at my best for them on Monday morning. Working from home prompts many challenges for how to separate working from being at home. Effectively separating this is critical to one's health, wellness, and self-care.

When was the last time you logged off on Friday at 5 p.m. and did not log back into that computer or think about anything related to work until Monday at 9 a.m.? If you can't remember, make it happen this weekend. You're no good to anyone else if you're no good to yourself first and always.

Leslie J. Pedigo

Director of Education

Phi Sigma Kappa Fraternity

I spent my first year on the job as a department of one. When a second person joined the team, I had to simultaneously adjust my work style while learning how to supervise for the first time. Through this process, I learned to ask questions and truly listen to ensure I know how to best support and advocate for my team.

As a middle manager, it can be challenging to balance the needs of my supervisor and supervisee, as well as my other colleagues, members, and board volunteers. I find success managing these varying needs by dedicating time weekly to thinking about current projects and tasks, as well as planning what needs to be communicated and to whom. I work well independently and begin projects quickly, meaning I sometimes forget to ask others for feedback. Since becoming a middle manager, I have made a point to include others in brainstorming and decision-making processes. Sharing project plans and hosting feedback sessions have helped with this. I've also clarified where decision making abilities fall for all initiatives within my scope.

As one of few women on the Phi Sigma Kappa Fraternity staff, and the only woman within the member services department, there is a perceived power difference between my coworkers and me. In experiencing this, I learned to be clear and concise when communicating and proactively assert my opinion when it impacts my work. As someone who cares deeply and enjoys seeing progress across the organization, I am still learning how to remain focused on areas within my control. This not only helps me maintain balance but also provides clear goals and objectives for the team to accomplish together.

Generally, middle management is not easy. It takes a lot of trial and error, communication, and a growth mindset to continuously improve.

a Perspectives

Contribute to AFA Perspectives!

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GROWING PAINS:

LATINX AND MULTICULTURAL FRATERNITIES AND SORORITIES AT HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES/UNIVERSITIES

ERIC JASON SIMEON
RASHEED ALI CROMWELL

"History and Homecoming" — a typical response one will receive when asking those familiar with historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) to describe their cultural significance. Black college bands, Black college football, and Black Greek letter organizations (BGLOs) are products and expressions of how profound this cultural significance is. They are a few of many examples of how HBCUs have shown the impact and influence of their institutional cultures on sports, music, and fraternities and sororities for decades.

This cultural significance, however, supplements a much deeper HBCU educational legacy. An educational legacy that, since their inception, has graduated some of the most influential people in the world. Dr. Martin Luther King, Toni Morrison, Thurgood Marshall, and Oprah Winfrey pioneered many aspects of civil rights, education, law, and entertainment. However, they barely scratch the surface of the wide range of influential graduates HBCUs continue to produce. For example, the United Negro College Fund (UNCF) states, "Though HBCUs make up only 3 percent of the country's colleges and universities, they enroll 10 percent of all African American students and produce almost 20 percent of all African American graduates."

As HBCUs continue to serve their original purpose, they also show potential to have a much broader impact — a more widespread and deeper influence that blends both the rich cultural significance and profound educational legacy to support a broader range of students of color.

LATINX STUDENTS: DIVERSITY AT HBCUS

As percentages of Latinx students in higher education continue to increase year-by-year (the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reported 3.3 million students as of 2019), there are also significant enrollment increases at HBCUs. The Latinx student population grew more than 120 percent over the last 30 years on these campuses and currently comprises approximately 5 percent of the total HBCU enrollment nationwide. This increase is especially pronounced in states like Texas where the Latinx population will soon be the majority. For example, St. Phillip's University in San Antonio currently boasts a 56 percent Latinx student enrollment. This demographic data makes it the only college in the United States to be federally designated as both an HBCU and Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI).

Latinx growth at HBCUs is primarily attributed to two reasons. First, HBCUs are oriented with a more student-centered focus. This approach consists of faculty and staff who are culturally aware and willing to meet students where they are, helping to provide a family-oriented and inclusive environment for Latinx students. Second, this environment becomes more salient as the country continues to deal with a polarizing political climate and alarming rate of hate crimes and other negative racial incidents that students of color face at predominantly white institutions (PWIs).

In addition to Latinx student needs, HBCUs have a need of their own. As they continue to struggle with enrollment numbers that existed before the global COVID-19 pandemic, they turn to alternative solutions to meet this need. Accordingly, they have targeted efforts to recruit more diverse student populations (mostly Latinx, Asian, and international students). Consequently, these factors influence HBCU staff and executives to consider best practices to support Latinx students (as well as these other demographic groups) once they arrive on campus.

Dr. Emmanuel Lalande, vice president for enrollment management and student services at Benedict College in Columbia, South Carolina, and member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. stated, "I believe it is imperative that HBCUs continue to attract Latinx students to their campuses. At Benedict, my first initiative was increasing our Latinx student population. One of my first hires was a Latinx diversity recruiter, who was instrumental in increasing this demographic by 2 percent." In addition to diversifying campus-based professionals, HBCUs can similarly position themselves to achieve not only an increase in numbers but also retention of Latinx students by hosting culturally based fraternal organizations (CBFOs) on campus. CBFOs are "fraternities and sororities founded for the primary purpose of advancing a marginalized community." In the fraternal world, these marginalized communities are often associated with supporting underrepresented populations who formed organizations to address the many challenges their members faced on college/university campuses. On a HBCU campus (institutions originally developed and designed to serve the Black community), CBFOs took the form of BGLOs, with five of the nine National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) organizations founded on HBCU campuses. The other four NPHC BGLOs, along with all Latino Greek Letter Organizations (LGLOs), were founded on Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs), with LGLOs focusing on serving Latinx students and their respective communities. Some LGLOs were founded before BGLOs, and both groups of organizations later served as inspiration for the founding of Multicultural Greeks which predominantly started in the 1990s. It is important to recognize a trend to utilize "fraternity/sorority life" as opposed to "Greek" to describe these organizations. Through extensive experiences working with these organizations on HBCU campuses, there are institutional culture and customs related to the use of this word. Since HBCUs are a central focus of the article, the adoption of the "local customs" are used in this context.

Multicultural Greeks and LGLOs share similarities but were " … founded by members from different populations with the primary purpose of starting an organization that consisted of a variety of races and ethnicities." Accordingly, multicultural Greeks formed a special council called the National Multicultural Greek Council (NMGC) that supports organizations who serve this need. It is well documented that these CBFOs (Black, Latinx, and multicultural) increase retention and success rates of students of color in higher education. To continue this success, HBCUs, as well as Latinx and multicultural organizations, must continue to explore best practices that enable these CBFOs to succeed on these unique campuses. While Asian-Interest organizations, represented by the National Asian Pacific Islander Desi American Panhellenic Association (NAPA) are outside of the scope of this article, it is worth noting that there are currently no HBCU campuses with a NAPA chapter. This is an area of interest that needs more exploration and research.

TEXAS: A LONE STAR FOR LATINX GREEKS AT HBCUS

11 percent of HBCUs currently have at least one LGLO or NMGC chapter. Currently, Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte, North Carolina has chapters of Lambda Theta Alpha Latin Sorority, Inc. and Lambda Theta Phi Latin Fraternity, Inc. on campus, but both are currently inactive with no members on campus. Similarly, Florida Memorial University in Miami Gardens has Mu Sigma Upsilon Sorority, Inc., an NMGC organization, and Lambda Sigma Upsilon Fraternity, Inc., who also have no active members on campus. While other HBCUs such as Morgan State University (Baltimore, Maryland) and North Carolina Central University (Durham) have active Latinx CBFOs, Texas is the state with the most HBCUs with active chapters representing these organizations.

The Lone Star state not only proudly boasts at least three HBCUs with active LGLOs but also serves as the state where

the first LGLO established at an HBCU, Sigma Lambda Beta International Fraternity, Inc. (SLB), was chartered at Prairie View A&M University in 1991. This data is consistent with both demographics based on the United States Census Data representing the racial/ethnic population of the state and student enrollment data for Latinx students on HBCU campuses. While the data theoretically supports CBFOs on HBCUs, their practical implementation and sustainability can present unique challenges and issues. We encourage both campus-based professionals and CBFO leadership to consider the following points as guidance in exploring these possibilities.

PREDOMINANTLY, NOT EXCLUSIVELY – A CBFO CHAPTER MAKE UP

While Prairie View A&M University, outside of Houston, saw a 200 percent increase in Latinx enrollment at the time of SLB's founding, it currently has a 5 percent Latinx student enrollment on campus, which is more consistent with the current data. Conversely, Huston-Tillotson in Austin has a higher population of Latinx student enrollment at almost 20 percent. These demographic variations indicate possible motivators for seeking membership. For instance, a more diverse student population at Huston-Tillotson may seek membership to support their needs and interests of Latinx students. In this context, the membership motivations may yield a more traditional Latinx membership.

However, there is the possibility that a Latinx or multicultural organization chapter at a HBCU could have a predominantly Black membership. On an individual level, Black students may personally identify as biracial or multicultural and see these organizations as an extension of themselves. In this case, it would probably be in alignment with the more traditional rationale for membership. In other instances, however, there may be situations where black students don't identify with Latinx or multicultural organizations at all but see LGLOs and NMGC as a viable option and better fit for them personally. This may be especially true on campuses where there is a smaller Latinx population or a limited choice of BGLO membership options. The same way black students choose to join predominantly white fraternities and sororities at PWIs, as opposed to predominantly black fraternities and sororities, is similar to the considerations they have with additional membership options at HBCUs.

This means that CBFO leadership and campus-based professionals should be prepared to institute diversity and inclusion training for their fraternity and sorority life community. Diversity and inclusion among people of color is an often-overlooked area related to this work with race and ethnicity, and specifically sensitive topics of intra-racial/ethnic relations. For instance: how will a Latinx organization or multicultural fraternity or sorority communicate its position on a "Black Lives Matter" incident to their chapters on a HBCU campus where some have predominantly black memberships while others do not? These dynamics are excellent opportunities to constructively address intra-organization "horizontal hostilities," as well as any collaterally related inter-organization and inter-council interpersonal communication challenges. Jessica Peñaranda, national president of NMGC stated, "Political education and learning the lessons of solidarity movements that center on community building relationships across Black, brown, indigenous, and other communities of color is one step toward bridging the gap that exists across our councils and our organizations."

Additionally, educating the student body on not only the similarities and differences between BGLOs, LGLOs, and multicultural Greeks but the nuances that exist in African and Latinx culture can increase understanding and connection. Intraculturally, both are far from monolithic and include a diverse representation within their respective diasporas. For example, South Texas' Latinx demographic is predominantly Mexican, while the Latinx population in South Florida is near predominantly Cuban. How will this impact the same LGLO or NMGC organization marketed at Texas Southern University in Houston, as opposed to Florida Memorial University in Miami? These individual, organizational, and institutional cultural dynamics should be considered when developing marketing, recruitment, and retention efforts for Latinx and multicultural organizations at HBCUs.

THE DNA OF A CBFO

In addition to cultural dynamics relating to identity, operational dynamics are critical to understanding how CBFOs function. For example, all NPHC BGLOs have formalized graduate chapters intricately involved in many of the daily functions of their correlating undergraduate chapters. Everything ranging from programming to new member intake must be approved and "signed off" on before proceeding with these functions.

Conversely, some Latinx and NMGC organizations do not operate in this manner. While alumni/ae associations may exist in some of these CBFOs, their undergraduate chapters can be more student-driven and not directed or coordinated by respective graduate entities. HBCU campus-based professionals and senior administrators (who are often BGLO members) may therefore maintain a BGLO operational lens and expect members of the city or regional alumni associations to respond to requests regarding Latinx or NMGC protocol, procedures, or paperwork.

HBCU campus-based professionals may have concerns regarding undergraduates providing this information. There are also generational dynamics to consider when it comes to chapter operations. In some cases, CBFOs were founded years later than BGLOs. This can translate into chapter advisors, regional directors, or national leadership that may be younger than the HBCU campus-based professionals working with them. This generational

difference can also influence and impact communication and perception of legitimacy and validity of that respective Latinx or multicultural organization. Education about the operations of CBFOs is vital to their health and sustainability at HBCUs. Still, the background information needs to be supplemented with proactive strategies to bridge potential gaps in communication.

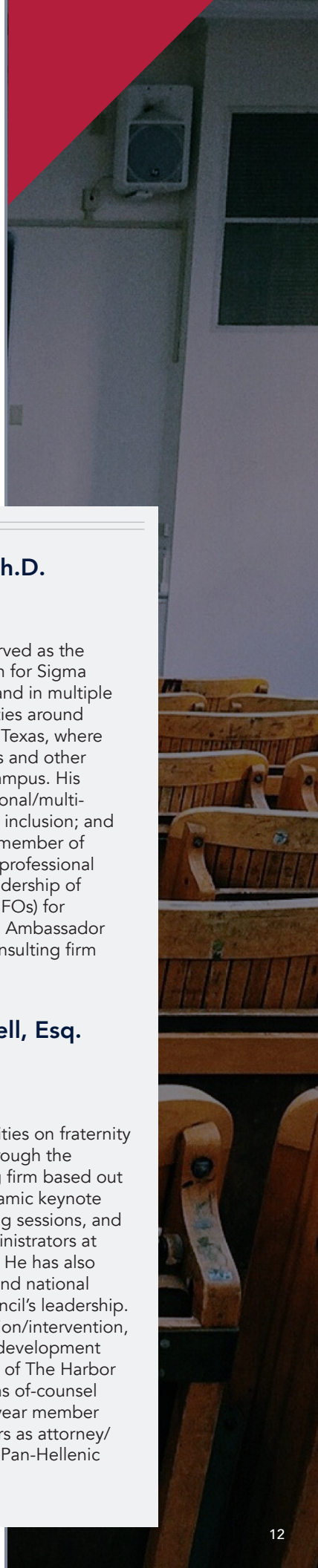
BRIDGING THE GAP

Many Latinx students from geographic areas (both domestic and international) with a strong Latinx cultural ethos (i.e., living in a new place or country in some instances) can be a culture shock. The cultural challenges and first-generation dynamics that sometimes exist can make it difficult for these students to succeed. The additional dynamic of being fully immersed in an environment dominated by African American culture (a huge part of the HBCU experience) creates another challenge that must be addressed. Depending on a student's personal experiences, initial culture shock — that even some Black students experience at HBCUs — can be addressed by administrators making extra efforts to bridge these gaps.

One way to bridge the gap is by establishing a larger home on campus for Latinx students to feel a sense of community and support. Cultural affinity groups with a broader and less exclusive presence — such as Latinx Student Associations (LSAs) or Latinx Student Unions (LSUs) — may create an easier transition to later onboard more specific Latinx and multicultural CBFOs. With a pre-existing, larger, and more familiar familial system, these cultural connections can also serve as supplemental pipelines for CBFOs to recruit new members already oriented to community service and ethnic heritage. This infrastructure requires building rapport with CBFOs, LSAs, LSUs, and other cultural affinity groups. Connecting with them to ascertain what they need to feel engaged as part of the campus community — either through campus-wide surveys or direct contact and discussion — can help build this rapport.

Another good step is leading a campus-wide effort to honor Hispanic Heritage Month, running September 15 to October 15, and charging all student organizations (not just fraternities and sororities) to collaborate and host programming centered on this celebration. Administrators can also encourage CBFO members to host a Latinx week where they strategically display flags representing their countries around campus. They can share personal stories via YouTube videos featuring their experiences as Latinx students to showcase the value of their personal experiences. Beyond all of this, it is key for HBCUs to have an organized and targeted enrollment program focused on Latinx students.

Growing pains can be uncomfortable but are ultimately critical for development and evolution. As HBCUs continue to grow, enroll more Latinx students, and support more CBFOs, a focus on identity, support, and communication are critical for student, organizational, and institutional success.



Eric Jason Simeon, Ph.D.

The Harbor Institute

Lead CBFO Ambassador

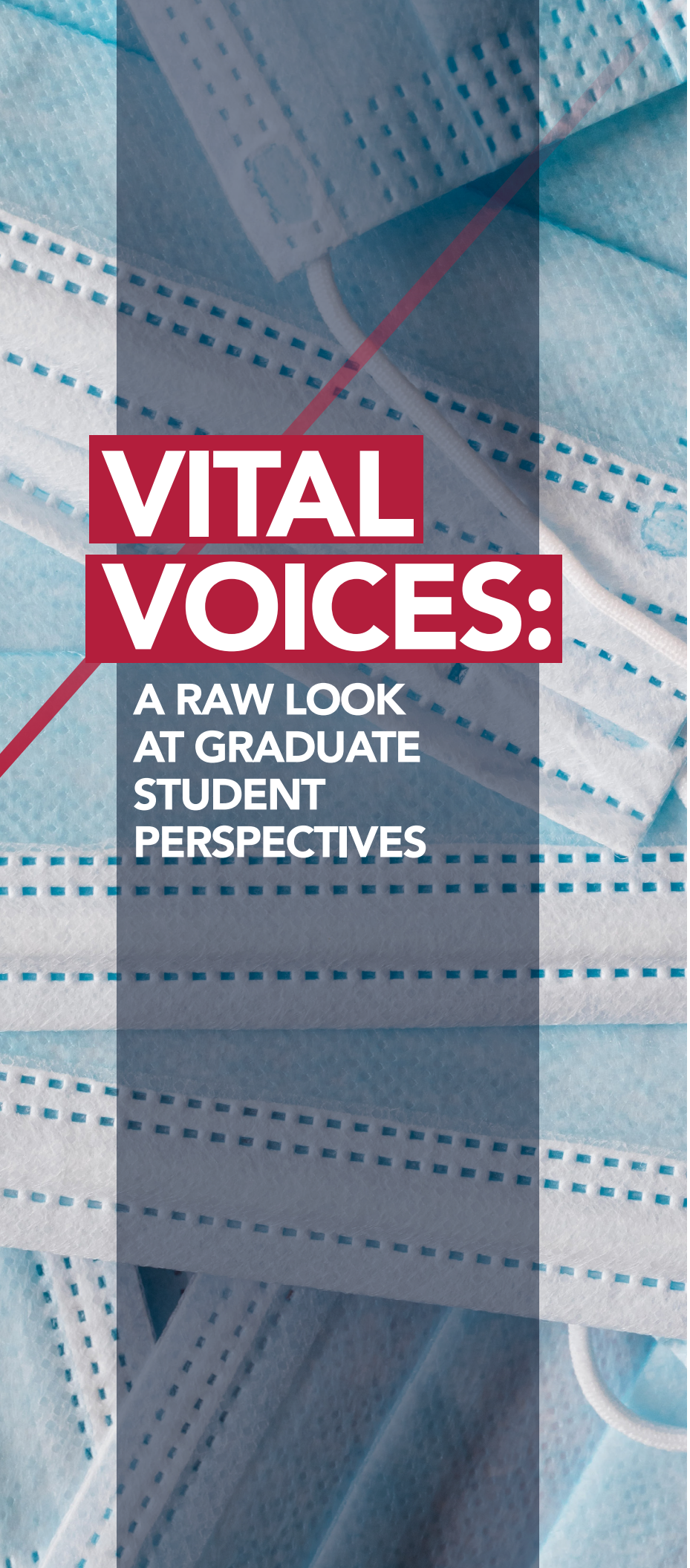
Dr. Eric Jason Simeon has served as the national director of education for Sigma Lambda Beta International Fraternity, Inc. and in multiple student affairs positions at several universities around the country, including a HBCU (and HSI) in Texas, where he was responsible for chartering of LGLOs and other Latino-focused student organizations on campus. His academic research is focused on cross-national/multi-institutional minorities in STEM; diversity & inclusion; and global citizenship education. As a 25-year member of SLB, he utilizes his extensive personal and professional experiences to empower members and leadership of culturally-based fraternal organizations (CBFOs) for success. He currently serves as Lead CBFO Ambassador for The Harbor Institute, an educational consulting firm based in Washington, D.C.

Rasheed Ali Cromwell, Esq.

The Harbor Institute

Founder & President

Rasheed Ali Cromwell, Esq. is one of the leading authorities on fraternity and sorority life on college campuses. Through the Harbor Institute, an educational consulting firm based out of Washington, DC, he has presented dynamic keynote speeches, interactive and engaging training sessions, and consulting for thousands of students/ administrators at over 275 colleges/universities in 38 states. He has also consulted with numerous CBFO regional and national leadership and various CBFO national council's leadership. He focuses on the areas of hazing prevention/intervention, diversity, equity and inclusion, leadership development and recruitment/retention. He is co-author of The Harbor Institute's Guide to CBFOs (2018), serves as of-counsel for Tran Arrowsmith law firm, and as a 25-year member of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., volunteers as attorney/ advisor for the Washington, D.C. National Pan-Hellenic Council (DCNPHC).



VITAL VOICES:

A RAW LOOK AT GRADUATE STUDENT PERSPECTIVES

MCKENZIE SAUER

It is hard to believe I graduated from a master's program months ago and am now a new professional. In a way, I am still mourning the loss of what I thought the end of two years in my graduate program would be. I thought I would say goodbye to friends, mentors, teachers, and especially the students I worked with. I thought I would walk across the stage, and in a sense, walk into a new life after years of hard work in academia. Instead, the world was thrown into isolation, and those long-awaited final moments never came. I know I am one of the lucky ones — I secured a position before the COVID-19 pandemic gripped the country, and I was able to transition into this new role. Even so, this is not how I envisioned the first few months of my job either — I continue to work remotely while attempting to create trusting, authentic relationships with students, learning to navigate a BIG10 school, and beginning a new life in Iowa. As I adjust and begin counting my wins (big and small), I often find myself thinking about colleagues entering their second year of graduate school. I think about how difficult it must be to balance both professional and student worries, while also preparing for a future that seems uncertain in higher education. Students are looking to professionals for answers, professionals are looking to students for innovation, and everyone is looking at themselves with a critical eye. I knew if I was feeling discouraged, I could not imagine what others are feeling.

Graduate students are one of the most exploited populations at colleges/universities and in this field. They are overworked, under-compensated, and expected to not question their environment out of fear of being seen as ungrateful for the privilege of education they hold. Too often, graduate students feel voiceless. This piece aims to provide space for graduate students experiencing paths that have never been journeyed before to speak openly and candidly about their emotions, hopes, and fears. I hope current graduate students find something within the following sentiments that resonates, so they feel a little less alone. I hope supervisors read these words and support their graduate students in ways they may have never needed to before. I hope all readers find the following individuals' abilities to see silver linings in a thunderstorm as poignant and beautiful as I do.

EMILY SLEDD

There's an overwhelmingly large part of me afraid of the unknown. First, current graduate students are completing degrees in a pandemic. All else aside, I am nervous for my mental, physical, and financial welfare. Rent takes up more than half of my monthly income from the university, but, as students, we don't have enough time to seek outside employment. Beyond that, it feels frowned upon if we do. Mentally, my classes and interactions with students I work with are completely online, leaving me isolated in my on-campus apartment in a town where I know almost no one. We have no idea what this traumatic time is doing to us, yet we attempt to continue business as usual. What does that even mean now, though? Physically, I am scared working in person puts graduate students more at risk for contracting COVID-19. I have an immune disorder, but I feel as if I have to give 150 percent effort to my office, never knowing whether I am a student or staff in any given situation. Higher education and student affairs already had an issue with work-life balance. Although the past few months have shown the profession we can have flexibility and still perform well, it has also made maintaining boundaries difficult.

I feel defeated, and at times, the fraternity members I advise have turned me into an emotional punching bag. They complain that all rules and policies created during a pandemic are bound to be broken by their brothers that don't care. I share their concern, wondering how we avoid being headlines of the inevitable outbreaks on campuses across the country. Though all of this runs through my mind daily, I am strangely hopeful. I believe we are on the cusp of major changes in higher education and fraternity/sorority affairs, even if I can't articulate what those changes look like just yet. This generation of professionals is resilient. We are attending school, working with students, and developing ourselves during this pandemic, and it is helping me develop my standards and expectations for future employers. I know what I do and do not want in my first job; and having three different supervisors during my assistantship has shown me what qualities I need to work on within myself.

I am struggling. I constantly fight imposter's syndrome. As I mentioned, there is no way to know what the trauma of the pandemic will result in long term. However, this time is teaching me about my strength and the true passion I have for pushing the fraternity/sorority experience into the future. I can't see the changes coming in detail just yet, but we all know "business as usual" will never look the same. We are heading into an era of higher education and fraternity/sorority life that will become more equitable, more challenging, and more rewarding than ever before. Students will have experiences that shape them into leaders we have never seen, and we will grow into professionals better able to handle whatever guidance they may need and whatever the world might throw at us … even a global pandemic.

RYAN LAUGHLIN

In my second year as a graduate staff member, I cannot help but try to find the positive in this situation. Yes, I may be in the middle of a pandemic, unable to do a majority of what I did in my first year, with fewer cohort interactions, a changing annual conference for AFA, an in-person internship, and etc., but it is not always something negative. For instance, not only do I have the opportunity to go to AFA virtually, but I can also make time for NASPA, ACPA, and TPE all without leaving my home in Boone. This means more opportunities for program proposals, networking opportunities, and general camaraderie in the field of student affairs. I also have more time for myself. Before the pandemic, I only visited my parents once while in graduate school, and they are only two and a half hours away. Work may be more uncertain and requires greater creativity, but we can do this work from anywhere. Airbnb by the beach, at the home of a partner who lives two hours away, on a Peloton, at my parent's house, or outside. These small perks show us the bright side of a dire situation, and we need them to keep up our optimism, our sanity, and for the sake of our students. So, do something you like. Spend time with family or attend a new webinar ... whatever makes you happy and a better professional.

ARNOLD NYATANGA

As a graduate student studying student affairs during a global pandemic, my world is filled with a constant rush of anxiety and a lot of unknowns. Here is the good, the bad, and the ugly of my personal experience.

For the "good," my professors are accommodating and show me what being a reflective practitioner looks like. They continue to give grace with assignments and the ways they navigate the chaos caused by COVID-19 is inspiring and keeps me going. I always feel like I am a human first and that is shown through actions and genuine care for me as a student during this time of severe stress.

For the "bad," I had to grieve never seeing some of my friends I looked up to in graduate school walk across the stage in celebration of their hard work. I also lost the opportunity to see some of the students I worked with graduate in-person and many end-of-year celebrations got cancelled. Those goodbyes meant a lot to me, and to not have them was impactful.

Finally, the "ugly." I am constantly worried what hiring processes will look like post COVID-19. Will jobs be available? Or will there be a lack of opportunity because colleges and universities had to make budget cuts? I am anxious about my graduate assistantship because I always worry about engaging students virtually. I often ask myself if students are even in a place to mentally engage in this way. Thinking about this being the reality for the rest of my graduate experience definitely keeps me up at night.

KLAIRE MATHEWS

As a second-year graduate student preparing to enter a career in higher education, there is much to think about and consider when navigating the next ten months. A specific fear of mine is that many graduate students are lacking experiences professionally and academically due to the global pandemic. Classes are online, internships are online, events we should have been part of were cancelled, and I worry we are missing essential pieces of education to prepare us to be professionals in a short amount of time. Due to the situation we find ourselves in, I foresee a tremendous amount of pressure on us as entry level professionals to have built skills this time next year that we do not have the means to build now.

To think of our professional lives from that perspective is heavy, so I would rather change a negative into a positive. From my perspective, we are missing out on professional development opportunities, but I believe there is opportunity in that. There is opportunity because for the first time in history, as entry level professionals, I see us being evaluated and judged not for the laundry list of words on a resume that ideally make us marketable; but for who we were and what we did with what we had during this time.

Graduate students are now developing in different ways than before. We are learning how to be more patient, more compassionate, more vulnerable, and by default more personable with students. There is opportunity in that as the next generation of incoming professionals shapes a new way of looking at higher education.

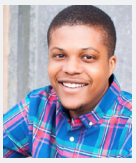
I am grateful for these humans as they took time to share their raw, heartfelt, and hopeful words with the association. As Klaire and Emily touched on, this group of fraternity/sorority professionals will bring so much to the profession through their experiences of adversity. Current graduate students are some of the most innovative and resilient professionals the field has ever seen. I hope we as practitioners — both new and seasoned — take time to reach out to graduate colleagues, support, and learn from them. Their voices are vital, so listen hard.

Emily Sledd

Ball State University

Student Affairs Administration in Higher Education

Emily Sledd is a second-year graduate student in Ball State University's Student Affairs Administration in Higher Education program. She is originally from Paris, KY, and she earned her B.S. in psychology at Eastern Kentucky University. She is currently the IFC advisor at Ball State and is a member of Alpha Omicron Pi. Emily's favorite quarantine activities are cooking, catching up on shows, and cuddling her pets, Paisley and Phoebe.



Arnold Nyatanga

Ball State University

Student Affairs Administration in Higher Education

Arnold Nyatanga is Zimbabwean born and Chicago raised. He is a graduate student in Ball State University's Student Affairs Administration in Higher Education program with an assistantship in the Office of Student Life working with fraternity and sorority life.

Ryan Laughlin

Appalachian State University

Graduate Assistant of Fraternity and Sorority Life

Ryan Laughlin is the graduate assistant of fraternity and sorority life in the Office of Campus Activities at Appalachian State University. He loves working with students affiliated with different Greek organizations and strives to give them the same positive experiences that he had while attending school. He received his bachelor's degree in economics at Winthrop University where he was also a member of the Rho Alpha Chapter of Tau Kappa Epsilon and will have his master's degree in student affairs administration in May of 2021.

Klaire Mathews

University of Mount Union

Graduate Assistant for Fraternity and Sorority Life

Klaire Mathews is a second-year graduate assistant for fraternity and sorority life at the University of Mount Union where she advises the Panhellenic Council, the Order of Omega executive board and assists in advising the Interfraternity Council. She is also studying higher education and administration at Kent State University. Prior to her graduate experience, she received her bachelor's degree from John Carroll University where she was first introduced to fraternity and sorority life upon joining Kappa Delta Sorority in 2014.

McKenzie Sauer

University of Iowa

Coordinator of Fraternity and Sorority Life Programs

McKenzie Sauer is the coordinator of fraternity and sorority life programs at the University of Iowa, where she serves as the Interfraternity Council advisor. She recently received her Master of Arts from Ball State University, where she developed a vested interest in the graduate student experience. In her free time, McKenzie likes to watch reality TV, read, and play with her corgi, Noodles.

YOU ABOUT TO LOSE YO JOB

HAMMED SIRLEAF & LASHATÁ GRAYSON

Do you ever receive emails that cause you to erase your response several times before responding because you are Black and you don't want to be labeled the "angry Black person"? Have you ever experienced a moment during a meeting when you've dealt with so many microaggressions that you think about saying something, but you pause to think through how to best navigate the situation? During this pause, you try to be intentional – thinking before you speak – because you know this could go one of two ways; however, neither way is good. You think, "How am I going to address the situation without having to fear losing my damn job?"

You begin to think it should get better with each new stage of your career. You begin to have those Issa Rae from "Insecure" talks with yourself and say:

> *"I just need to put in x amount of time here,"*
> *"Two years of grad school and I am out of here," or*
> *"Wait until x, y, and z to happen."*

These are the daily thoughts that ran through my mind as a graduate student and amidst what is currently happening in the world. This feeling hit me even harder because I was job searching. I battled a fear to speak up, and I questioned picking the fight I would risk it all for, sometimes going as far as contemplating "Do I fight for my students? Or do I fight for myself?"

The thoughts and experiences I had in graduate school were riddled with constant racial battle fatigue. Then, I had a moment of realization when I spoke up about how my students felt about the "office culture versus them" relationship. In speaking up, I realized so much about the many life lessons my mother taught me while growing up. It was this moment of addressing issues and getting no answers that I said to myself, "This is really happening, and they do not understand what is happening, nor do they really care." After that moment, I quickly became aware. I became calculated on everything from volunteer opportunities to presenting at conferences — I would not allow anyone to paint a negative narrative of me or my work ethic. I wrote a proposal for what I wanted my second-year graduate experience to look like. I would not allow others to place me in a box. Let's face it: I was just a graduate student there for two years. It was okay if I just took everything because it would get better, right?

Wrong. It's even worse as a new professional. We have to present the best versions of ourselves at every corner. There have been times I was stared down with countless acts of racism, and I felt like I had to grin and bear it. Why? Because I was excited to have a job, I didn't want to lose it, and I didn't want to be "blackballed" from the field. Supervisors I worked for —although the Black community and other faculty and staff saw otherwise — said I wasn't "moving the needle" or "living up to the values of the institution" because I took into consideration the cultural needs of BIPOC students.

Both as a graduate student and new professional, I was told I should "take the L" and deal with it. Why is that the norm? Why do I have to argue with supervisors about why Black Lives Matter and that it does NOT mean other lives don't? Why do I have to educate staff on why Colin Kaepernick, American civil rights activist and football quarterback, took a knee? Why was I ridiculed for saying I brought some "culture" to the institution? Racism within fraternity/sorority life is a taboo topic. Not only do I have to advocate for students within NPHC and MGC who are consistently shortchanged by fraternity/sorority life offices, but I also have to wonder, "Should I advocate for my students? Or myself?"

Stanford University professor and scholar, Amado Padilla, introduced the concept of cultural taxation to describe this burden where additional responsibilities are placed upon non-white faculty because of their ethno-racial backgrounds. These responsibilities include serving on committees for equity and inclusion efforts, advising larger numbers of students, and serving as departmental experts for their particular ethnic-racial group. These expectations of non-white faculty are not placed as heavily upon white faculty, which can impede career progress and affect job satisfaction for non-white professionals.

Not only are non-white faculty and staff culturally taxed, but we are also charged to provide high-quality work, advising and support, and nurture not just fraternity/sorority life students but ALL Black students. However, when it comes to a white/IFC/Panhellenic colleague, they are shown so much grace. Grace for lack of experience with CBFO operations. Grace for not being culturally competent. Grace for the opportunity to figure it out. As Black people, where is our grace?

It is a shame Black professionals feel and know this to be the norm. It is a shame we must endure so much just to have a seat at the table, when in most cases, we are turned away or not even heard. If one only knew how scared I was at my previous institution of employment to step into the human resources office to speak my truth, not knowing what lay ahead, possibly even termination.

It is not just enough to understand the toxic systems within this work, though — we must identify and create better opportunities for graduate and new professionals to succeed. Those individuals supervising graduate students must ask themselves, "Am I intentionally preparing them for the field?"

How are you preparing Black/CBFO-affiliated graduate students for the systemic racism within the fraternity/sorority life functional area? What

opportunities are graduate students given to work with IFC/Panhellenic councils? So many of us apply for positions only to be turned away because all we know is working with CBFOs.

How are you preparing your white/IFC/Panhellenic-affiliated graduate students to work with those whose experiences are different from their own? By "prepare," I do not solely mean knowing the language for CBFOs; I mean knowing these organizations' unique "why" for being part of the fraternal moment, their daily struggles, and their identities.

For new professionals, supervisors should create pipelines for all of their employees (especially Black/CBFO-affiliated ones) to receive direct opportunities to gain the experience they need to succeed in the field. What committees would be helpful for their growth? What projects could help them sharpen their skills? What councils could they work with to gain more exposure and experience? Most importantly, how are you crafting the job description to be equitable, and how are you helping employees draft performance plans to ensure they reach the goals needed to succeed in the field?

We must start practicing what we preach. Many of us have attended a student affairs master's program or received professional development detailing the student development theories that frame the work we do. Why aren't we moving past Sanford's Challenge and Support model and working through the theories that help us understand students' racial identities and experiences? Let's face the reality of what is going on and realize it is not enough to have a student involved in an organization. There are many layers to students, and they need to be honored and respected.

For our Black colleagues, now is the time to speak up. Don't be afraid to walk into the HR office to speak your truth. If we are going to see any change, it has to be up to us. There are plenty of resources on campus to help you tell your story. If there are not, know that you have a network of those who have been there and are currently there to support you. Zora Neale Hurston, a sorority woman, stated "If you are silent about your pain, they'll kill you and say you enjoyed it." Do NOT let your pain, your struggle, or your hurt go unheard. Just as much as you matter, your voice matters. Don't let anyone take that away from you. And trust me, if you're as good as you know you are, you won't lose your damn job.

Hammed Sirleaf
George Mason University
Assistant Director for Fraternity/Sorority Life

Hammed Sirleaf, a Black man, serves as the assistant director for fraternity/sorority life at George Mason University. Hammed received his Bachelor of Arts in African American studies with a concentration in sociology from the College of Charleston in South Carolina and his Master of Science in educational leadership studies with an option in college student development from Oklahoma State University. Hammed is passionate about music, community, civic engagement, and uplifting the voices of others. Hammed is also a proud member of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc.

LaShatá Grayson
Missouri State University
Assistant Director for Student Involvement

LaShatá Grayson, a Black woman, serves as the assistant director for student involvement at Missouri State University and is an organizational growth consultant for Phired Up Productions. LaShatá received a Bachelor of Science in management with a concentration in event management from Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis and her Master of Science in educational leadership studies from Southern Illinois University Edwardsville. LaShatá is passionate about accessibility for students in and outside of the classroom, advocacy, student and program development, and motivating and inspiring women to become physically fit. LaShatá is also a proud member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

WE CAN DO HARD THINGS

REGION IV TEAM

BRITTANY BARNES DEEG

2020 has been a whirlwind … throughout a global pandemic; the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and continued racial injustice; protests; murder hornets; natural disasters and severe weather crippling all corners of the country; and returning to school amidst it all, the Region IV Membership Engagement and Recruitment (MER) Team adopted Glennon Doyle's words "we can do hard things " as our mantra. We committed to not only providing education to Region IV, but also to learn and grow together through our volunteer experiences. We acknowledge education is not successful in a vacuum and everyone learns in different ways. With this in mind, we approached educating Region IV on strategies that improve professional health and well-being in four ways.

1. This article. In this article, you will see six professionals share their perspectives on well-being and how to achieve it.

2. A video with words of encouragement, so those in Region IV would not feel alone in whatever circumstances they may face.

3. Pre-work for educational opportunities. Our hope is for those who enter the Region IV educational space to be prepared to engage in meaningful ways through individual preparation and reflection. We work to prime and frame every educational opportunity to allow for optimal learning and continued engagement, as opposed to one-off events.

4. Provide space for those who completed the pre-work to enjoy time with others who also want to experience better professional and overall health by separating one's self-concept from the work one does.

In the below article, we hope you find connection points and opportunities for learning based on how we — within Region IV — are individually and collectively navigating hard things.

ZP PFEIFER

You can do hard things. As quarantine stretches on, and we continue to seek new ways to find ourselves in this new normal, it is critical not to lose sight of the fact that we can do hard things. In the book "Presence: Bringing Your Boldest Self to Your Biggest Challenges," Amy Cuddy suggests the difference between an expert and a master is that a master brings their boldest and most authentic self to the work they do. We can all likely think of people skilled in their respective areas but who are phoning in to the work they do. It is when we bring presence to the work we do that we transcend into mastery level. Over the past several months, I have sought new ways to build grit and prove to myself I can do hard things. The primary way I have done this is by running a mile (or more) each morning. When I began this journey, I was barely able to run a tenth of a mile before tiring out and walking. Each morning, I woke up and tried again. Each day, I was able to progress a little farther in my goal of running a mile. A month into quarantine, I huffed and puffed my way through the entire distance without walking. It was through pushing myself not to settle, recognizing the challenge I set for myself, and working diligently to obtain my goal that I was able to accomplish this feat. Why does this matter in the concept of obtaining mastery?

Each morning, I woke up and felt that I didn't want to run and couldn't do it. Each morning, I talked myself out of that thinking, reminding myself I have done harder things in the past and this is just one more challenge to face. We are our own greatest barriers to achieving mastery in our craft. Many of us convince ourselves we are frauds and incapable of achieving the successes we work for. It was through achieving incremental success each morning that I started to realize I could do this. I could do hard things. Every morning I ran a little farther, my morning doubts lessened. The next day I had to do less convincing because I had proven to myself I could do it. Throughout this academic year, it is important to remember you, too, can do hard things. Each morning, you may feel disheartened, downtrodden, put out, and all around beaten down. Find the little win in your day. Find the success you can cling onto, so you keep going each morning. The doubts will fade. You will succeed. Mastery is about developing grit to keep going. I recommend finding something you have wanted to do and striving to achieve a little bit of that goal every day. Find the smallest unit of time you can reasonably dedicate to accomplishing that goal and work at it nonstop. After that time is done, you may find yourself wanting to continue or stop. Both are fine. You have done what you set out to do. Tomorrow, you can try again with a little bit more time. Developing this grit and dedication is critical to obtaining mastery. Knowing who we are, deep down, comes from facing difficult times and coming out of them better people. I know these times are tough, but you too can do hard things. Keep bringing your full self to the work you do, and you will persevere and obtain mastery.

ANDREA KLEEKAMP

Since March, I have found one thing to be true: I don't have all the answers and that's okay. I'll tell you something honest and true about me: I love knowing things. I really love order. Predictability is my jam. If you're a CliftonStrengths person, Learner is my top strength. If you're an Enneagram person, I'm a 1. Having control and all the information is who I am; yet, for the last six months, I've had none of that. Very early in this experience, I made a decision. I decided to give myself grace in not having all the answers. I started my career in higher education 15 years ago with a graduate assistantship, and I have never had to work as I am now. There isn't an old resource I can dust off or historical knowledge of "Well, this is how I handled the last pandemic." For the first time in a long time, everything is new, and that hasn't been fun.

However, with that grace for myself, I've made it through. I have acknowledged I cannot have every answer; and I'll say it again: that's okay. What I can do is ask questions. What I can do is provide connections to expert information and strong resources. What I can do is ask for help. These certainly aren't new or revolutionary strategies, but they are critical to my work and more importantly to my well-being.

More than ever, I find my well-being intertwined with my work as the realities of what influences my work also impacts my life outside of it. That said, I've been mindful to take breaks. When my husband and I were wedding planning, we had meals where we would prohibit talking about the wedding. If either of us veered into that territory, the other was responsible for accountability. My husband works in health care, and we've enacted the same rules these days. We have many other interests and topics to discuss,

and this intentionality has given us space to find growth, connection, and joy amidst all the uncertainty, stress, and change.

I will end this reflection by sharing how my day begins. Before I start working, I spend 30 minutes outside. It's just me, my dog, and whatever book I'm currently reading sitting quietly in the backyard. In that time, I have the space to just be. Whatever the world has in store for me after that is anyone's guess, but no matter what, I will be able to say I took that needed time for me.

CLARE DENHOLLEM

To put it simply, 2020 has been hard, but we can do hard things. Navigating the ups and downs of this year — especially as a campus based professional — is taxing. I've grown significantly as a professional and person, but it has been a tough road. I've made it through the majority of the year though, and so have you! I will share a few things that have helped me get through the tough spots, and I hope this can help you too.

Each day this year is harder than the last, so I've found small things to inject joy and excitement into my life. This includes things like putting on fake nails and click-clacking on various surfaces; trying and comparing different brands of flavored seltzer water; buying purple eyeliner and perfecting my cat eye; along with a variety of other small things. Anything you've ever thought of doing, or are interested in, do it! Small joys can truly turn your day or week around. While all of this may sound cheesy, I'll get to the cheesiest part. One thing I remind myself of in moments of stress is time passes and so will this. I've made it through the majority of this year, and the hardest parts are slowly inching behind me. To add a further sprinkling of cheese, I remind myself I've made it through hard situations before, and I've still managed to move forward. I hope this gives you inspiration to finally buy that tiny thing you typically skip over at the grocery store and reminds you of your favorite cheesy quote. Time passes and so will this. As we all learned from "High School Musical," we're all in this together. 2020 will soon be behind us.

BRITTANY BARNES DEEG

This time of isolation leaves me feeling unmoored from who I am and inextricably tied to a four-wall room. I identify as an extrovert, and while virtual meetings and phone dates provide some relief during this quaran-time, I feel lost as a person. Who am I without others? It is a scary and hard question to answer.

To reflect upon that question, I took to the outdoors. Kansas offers a lot of open space away from people, and I see this as an opportunity to make good use of it. I had my first realization while on a backroad country drive – I am a person who has always connected with and felt more relaxed outdoors. I remembered my elementary school self, taking a book and a bike to the local wooded area to read for a few hours. I remembered the graduate student completing assignments at the local park. The experience offered a gentle reframe of my previous question, "Who am I when I am my truest self?" Dr. Amy Cuddy explores this question in her book, "Presence: Bringing Your Boldest Self to Your Biggest Challenges," and shares key points that resonated with my personal exploration over the last several months.

One tactic Dr. Cuddy outlines is identifying and affirming core beliefs about oneself. This is a familiar refrain for me as a fraternity/sorority professional. I have heard a version of "core values" since becoming a member; however, Cuddy laid out this practice as more focused on affirming who we are at our best, truest self rather than what we believe. That shifted me toward thinking of who I am at my core – a Hanson and theatre loving nerd who feels deeply, desires fairness, watches indie films, basks in nature's beauty, and makes delicious food. I was so focused on the external changes of the world that I forgot about my consistent internal self. I acknowledged while circumstances have changed, I am grounded in something that has remained constant over several years. I put on some angsty mid-2000s music (As Tall As Lions) and … I felt at home. The activation I felt listening to this old playlist is challenging to describe but instantly felt familiar, relieving, and peaceful.

Reflection is great and I found that exercise helpful when considering the long-term, but there was not an active component to push me beyond feeling stuck. My head was reeling, so I did what I know to be true about myself and sorted everything into a master list. Upon reviewing the list, I recognized another tactic Dr. Cuddy mentions that could help me move forward— the self-nudge. Research created by Dr. James Wilk and popularized by Drs. Richard Thaler and Carol Dweck, defines self-nudges as "empowering interventions that

enable people to design and structure their own decision environments." The new framing of self I built could be applied to the list I made. The framing saw each task as a challenge and rewarding experience — a way I often saw large projects, homework, or athletic challenges. Post-it notes with familiar phrases from teachers and mentors also made their way onto my monitor, harkening back to times when I met self-made goals in the past. It's not a perfect system, but by looking toward my past I feel better equipped to show up for the future, whatever it holds. This is a challenging time; however, it is not the only time I've navigated challenges successfully. Some green space, a tried and true playlist, and a healthy brain dump remind me of the hard things I can do.

JIM GULBRANSON

I wrote an article for Essentials, AFA's monthly e-publication, about steps to finding one's "niche," and I am happy the story behind those steps found its home in this article. My three niches in the fraternity/sorority world have always been policy, accountability, and harm reduction education. Upon entering a new institution, I found risk management and policy in swing, especially with the elimination of FIPG. For accountability, I wasn't in charge of organizational conduct. Lastly, I learned building a space for community education to occur was the priority before harm reduction education could happen. What I defined as my professional identity needed to be funneled into new avenues for success.

During the first week at my new job, my supervisor asked me to collaborate with her to turn fraternity/sorority life on its head. We drafted a new strategic plan that expanded the community's values from four to five, created learning outcomes for each value, and created explanations of each sub-section so community members could learn and understand the need for change. We created the community's mission and vision. We finalized the creation of a Standards of Excellence Program that supported the strategic plan. Through this, I found an outlet for my policy niche. That project led to my current project — a four-year community education program. I've gathered experiences from headquarters professionals, graduate school, and students to develop a program focused on values and experienced-based education. It gives every student an opportunity to learn community values in a more interactive way than sitting in a classroom. That refocused my harm reduction niche. My accountability niche manifested not in student accountability, but in being a better advocate for students and teaching them what organizational accountability can do to build a strong chapter.

I believe Bronfrenbrenner's Developmental Ecology is why finding one's niche is so important to professional wellness. What does the idea of a microsystem — a pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced in a given face-to-face setting with various features that allow for interaction and engagement within an immediate environment — have to do with professional wellness, you may ask? To develop, we must engage in complex opportunities that force us out of our comfort zones. These opportunities propel us through Bronfrenbrenner's theory of meso-, exo-, and macrosystems. The work you do is hard but as Robert Frost says, "Two roads diverged in a wood, and I – I took the one less traveled by, And that has made all the difference." The hard things usually are the best adventures.

CHRISTOPHER MIOFSKY

One opportunity for a healthier work/life balance is to set boundaries. Setting boundaries with students and colleagues allows for open, honest conversations about personal wellness and mental health. Start by setting work time and off time. This should be done with both students and colleagues, so boundaries are agreeable to all. For example, 8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. for work time works for some communities, but not others. Ensure all voices are heard and agree to these times so all have buy-in. Once time boundaries are set, it is crucial all parties adhere to them. Emails or texts, received after the designated work time, should be held until the next business day unless the situation is an emergency. Just as professional boundaries should be adhered to, student boundaries should be, as well. Do not contact students outside of the designated times. This is where the mutual agreement becomes crucial. Boundaries are only as good as those who maintain them. This also provides students with professional development and role modeling on how to advocate for themselves and their own mental health. Students should be encouraged to set up similar boundaries with members of their organizations, classmates, and professors.

Today's society often demands immediate responses and constant availability. While setting up boundaries is one way to maintain work/life balance, notifications are another. A wise supervisor once said, "There is nothing in your email that can't wait until tomorrow. Turn the notifications off. If it's an emergency, they'll call you." This is one of the main tenets for maintaining my healthy work/life balance. Having emails delivered to a mobile device, but turning off the notifications, allows for an "opt-in" to check emails (when desired), and it does away with the constant reminder of work and to-do lists.

The love of the work is paramount to continuing in the field, but the love of the work must not consume daily life. Too often, colleagues have (among other reasons) left higher education due to unhealthy work/life balances. It is critical to stay in the field long term to support students in making authentic, lasting change. Why is the "shelf-life" of a professional only a few years here and there? How does that support authentic, lasting change when roles constantly cycle through professionals? The same question applies for students and their burnout. How does the cycle of "Get 'em in, burn 'em out, find someone new" affect authentic, lasting change? Spoiler alert: it doesn't.

The work we do is full of hard things. In 2020, the work we have been asked to do has become even harder. Even so, we each have a reason we feel called to do this work. To persist, it is important to keep perspective and consider how we approach not only our work, but ourselves. We hope our reflections inspire and nudge you to do some of your own introspection and self-care.

ZP Pfeifer

Marquette University

Sorority/Fraternity Life Coordinator

ZP Pfeifer is the sorority/fraternity life coordinator at Marquette University. Prior to his role at Marquette, ZP worked for the University of Wisconsin – La Crosse and Wesleyan University. A member of Sigma Phi Epsilon, ZP did his undergraduate and graduate work at the University of Louisville. ZP enjoys hiking, working out, and running in his new hometown of Lake Geneva, Wisconsin.

Andrea Kleekamp

Alpha Delta Pi Sorority

Risk Reduction and Education Specialist

Andrea Kleekamp is the risk reduction and education specialist for Alpha Delta Pi Sorority. She holds degrees from the University of Kansas and Kansas State University, where she joined Kappa Alpha Theta. She loves the work she has done throughout her career in prevention, education, and risk management. She also loves reading, the Kansas City Royals, and her life in Kansas.

Clare Denhollem

Stephen F. Austin State University

Coordinator of Fraternity/Sorority Life

Clare Denhollem is the coordinator of fraternity/sorority life at Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, TX – the oldest town in Texas! She did her undergrad at the University of New Orleans, where she joined Zeta Tau Alpha, and did her grad work at the University of North Texas. She is especially grateful for her students and friends that laugh at her jokes.

Brittany Barnes Deeg

RISE Partnerships

Director of Curriculum and Training

Brittany Barnes Deeg is passionate about learning through deep dives about community organizing, design thinking, assessment, and capacity-building strategies. As the director of curriculum and training for RISE Partnerships, she helps fraternity/sorority professionals do their best work, together. She holds degrees from the University of Iowa and Kent State University, where she became a member of Chi Omega. Brittany loves Diet Coke, talking about nerdy and complex things, watching true crime documentaries, and reading memoirs and obscure fiction.

Christopher Miofsky

Washburn University

Assistant Director of Student Involvement and Development

Christopher Miofsky serves as the assistant director of student involvement and development at Washburn University. A member of Delta Lambda Phi Fraternity, he is a graduate of both Southern Illinois University Edwardsville and the University of Missouri – St. Louis. A supporter of St. Louis sports and the arts, he is honored to contribute to this article and advance our profession.

Jim Gulbranson

Northwest Missouri State University

Coordinator for Greek life

Jim Gulbranson serves as the coordinator for Greek life at Northwest Missouri State University. Jim did his undergraduate work at the University of South Dakota and his graduate work at the University of Central Missouri. He has also worked for his own fraternity, Lambda Chi Alpha. Jim greatly enjoys rituals, cooking, playing his tenor sax when the opportunity comes around, and climbing.

Sitting on shelves in national headquarters, volunteer's homes, and fraternity and sorority life offices across the nation is a large reference book called "Baird's Manual of American College Fraternities." This book was once produced with some regularity, resulting in 20 editions between 1879 and 1991. This book was the primary reference for many people who were researching fraternities and sororities. However, the last update occurred in 1991, since then there have been many different changes to the landscape of fraternities and sororities. With the expansion of the internet, and information becoming more accessible online, the publication of the "Bairds Manual of American College Fraternities" has become a relic.

Those currently searching for historic references about fraternities and sororities might come across a new online resource, The Almanac of Fraternities and Sororities which is hosted by the Student Life and Culture Archives at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. This new online resource aims to follow in the tradition of "Baird's Manual of American College Fraternities."

https://archives.library.illinois.edu/slc/welcome/fraternity-sorority-almanac/

Recently Perspectives had the opportunity to speak with Ellen Swain (ES), archivist at the University of Illinois, and Fran Becque (FB), Pi Beta Phi archivist and historian and owner of the website Fraternity History & More (franbecque.com).

Perspectives: According to its website, The Student Life and Culture Archival Program was founded in 1989 through the generous endowment of the Stewart S. Howe Foundation. Illinois alumnus Stewart S. Howe '28 (Kappa Sigma) was founder and owner of the Stewart S. Howe Alumni Service, which provided management, public relations, and fund-raising assistance to fraternities, sororities, and institutions of higher education. He had a life-long interest in higher education and was a dedicated collector of material dealing with fraternal organizations and other areas of college life. His world-renowned collection is the need in the ensuing three decades, including the establishment of cultural interest organizations. And the Almanac is updated on a regular basis as chapters are chartered and others are closed.

There are several sections in the Almanac. Introductory files document the evolution of the fraternity and sorority system, founding dates, founding institutions, a chronology, and the largest organizations at the start of each decade.

The organizations are featured in three sections — Men's, Women's, and Co-ed, for organizations with more than three chapters. There is also a section for organizations that no longer exist.

Fraternities and sororities exist at more than 1,000 institutions in North America. The listings include all the groups that have existed on a campus, as well as the years they were active. Another section covers more than 100 institutions that are closed.

ES: The Almanac is another outreach effort for the national audience. Through both the Almanac and the Archives, the Student Life and Culture Archives has tried to be inclusive by reaching out widely with an interest in documenting all groups.

Locally, we work closely with student groups, including fraternities and sororities, to connect students and organizations to their history. Students can upload their digital files to us, as well as deposit boxes of materials. We do exhibits for student and alumni events, particularly for the Greek groups, have partnered with the National Society for the Preservation of Greek Housing to write chapter histories, hold speakers series and events on student history, and work closely with students and faculty through classes and projects.

How would you describe the work you do in the Archives and the Fraternity and Sorority Almanac Program?

ES: Everything we (the Student Life and Archives) do is in an effort to connect users with archival materials—acquiring & preserving materials and then making them available for research. At the center of this work is outreach. On a national level, the Student Life and Culture Archival Program has sponsored and organized, with Kappa Alpha Theta, the National Archives Conference for Fraternities and Sororities every other year (in 2018 we held a small conference in Indy). Because of COVID-19, the 2020 conference couldn't happen. We're looking a virtual conference in the near future. You can learn more about the National Archives Conference for Fraternities and Sororities here: https://www.library.illinois.edu/slc/news-events/national-archives-conference/.

Why do you think looking back at our historical documents and publications can have relevance to us today?

FB: The fraternity magazines provide an interesting glimpse into campus and chapter life of the past. Up until the 1980s or so, most magazines contained chapter letters written by a correspondent whose job it was to chronicle the semester's activities. One can look in these journals to see how chapters handled the World Wars, other pandemics and other events. The histories, the journals, and the collections of materials contained in the archives offer proof that there have been challenges to the system throughout its existence. While each fraternity and sorority has its own archives which may or may not be open to the general public, SLC offers materials belonging to many organizations.

What do you wish those of us who work with fraternities and sororities would do to preserve history?

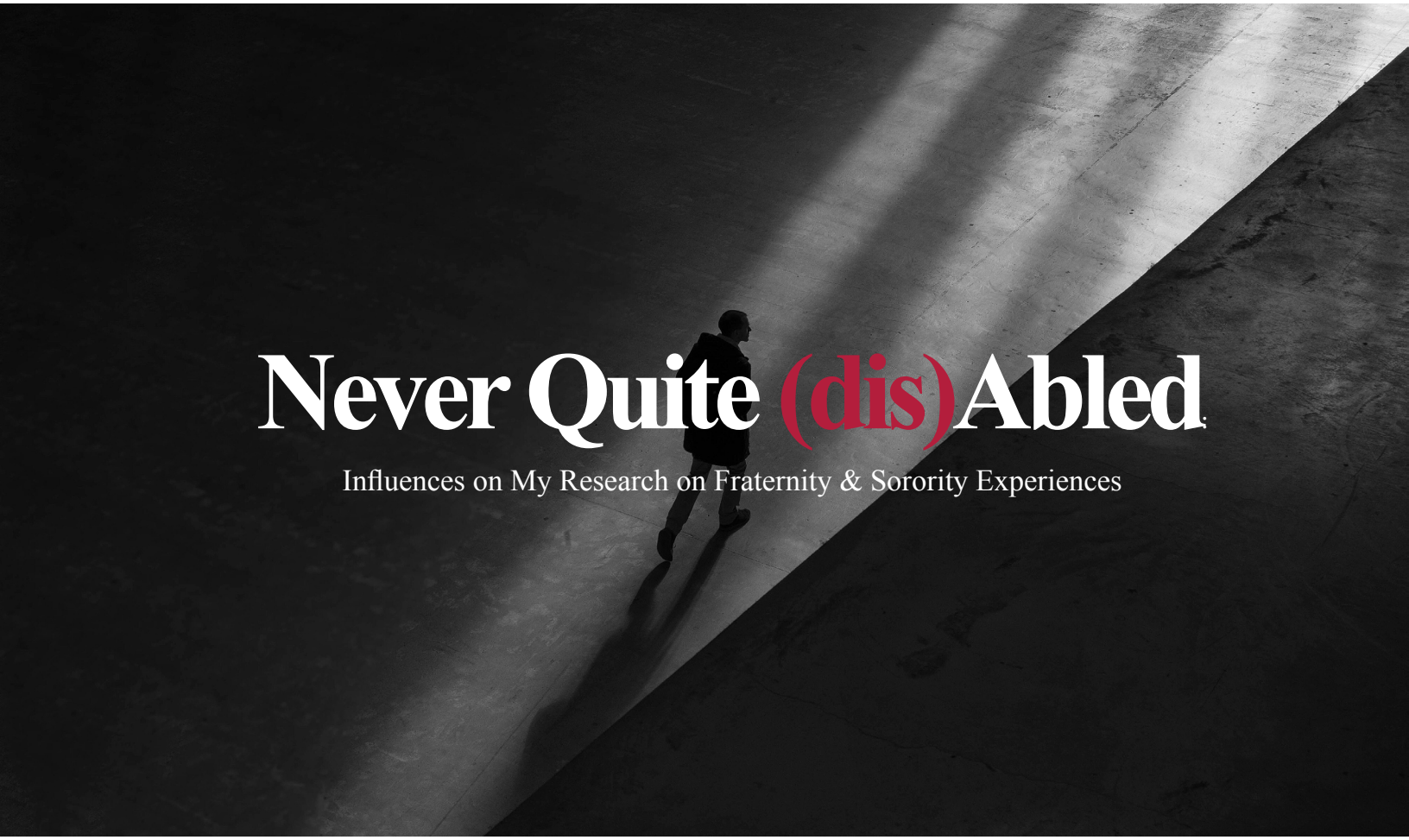
ES: Advocate for the importance of your local campus archives as a place where fraternities and sororities can preserve their history. In addition to their historical value to the chapter, these records are invaluable for understanding student experience more broadly in terms of local campus history and national history (civil rights, women's education and history, student attitudes through time).

What else would you like for the readers of Perspectives to know?

ES: SLC is a great resource for your questions concerning fraternity and sorority history.

CLOSING SUMMARY

Fraternity and sorority members at all levels will frequently talk about history, tradition, and legacy. With the development of resources such as the Fraternity and Sorority Almanac, both practitioners and researchers have valuable tools available to open up access to information about our organizations and the student experience like never before. These national resources, along with local campus resources, provide us with an opportunity to learn from where we have been, while also ensuring the experiences of today are chronicled for those who will come after us.



Never Quite (dis)Abled

Influences on My Research on Fraternity & Sorority Experiences

PIETRO A. SASSO

This is a scholarly personal narrative informed by the work of Robert Nash of "Liberating Scholarly Writing: The Power of Personal Narrative" and Jeremy Snipes of "Coming Full Circle: A Scholarly Personal Narrative of Religion and Spirituality in Graduate Education." Snipes suggests a scholarly personal narrative is influenced by autoethnography. Nash describes the nuances of scholarly personal narrative (SPN) as it "helps us to understand our histories, shape our destinies, develop our moral imaginations, and give us something truly worth living and dying for." Nash further states an SPN is "meant to benefit the reader, touch readers' lives by informing their experiences, by transforming the meaning of events … by saying, in the end, what simply happens to the writer is not truly what matters."

Nash encourages a SPN to explore the personae in which the individual narrative of the researcher, as the author, is used to contextualize and connect to issues, concepts, and themes that carry more universal meanings for the reader. This is an introspective process that shifts outward toward cultural inequities or issues of collective consciousness (Snipes, 2020). In this autoethnographic SPN, I share some of my own developmental arc through personal experiences and benchmarks beginning from early childhood to my fraternity experience. This narrative will foreground issues of ability and culture. I will connect these experiences to offer how they have influenced my fraternity/sorority research agenda and offer suggestions for the future of this area of scholarship and inquiry. I draw this current SPN from data sources that include past positionality statements in my qualitative research and reflections when completing counseling coursework during persistence to completion of my doctoral degree. These data sources serve as the primer to the SPN that follows.

BICULTURAL ORIENTATION

I was originally born to working-class parents in the immediate outskirts of Washington, D.C. My father was Latino and Italian and was an immigrant. My mother was white with no specific background and my paternal grandparents did not approve of my her. Therefore, significant tension existed between my parents regarding my cultural identity which is common among culturally mixed families (Schlabach, 2014), particularly those from Latinx heritage (Whaley & Francis, 2006).

In my socialization as a child and across my developmental arc, I developed what Torres (1999) terms a bicultural orientation, as I identified with both Anglo and Latinx cultures with moderate levels of racial salience. Unfortunately, growing up under the shadow of my father was challenging given the dynamics of machismo (Salinas, 2015). I was not physically similar to my father and this resulted in many peers often assigning me the moniker of "milkman" and this sort of bullying is common for those from multiple cultural heritages (Shih & Sanchez, 2006).

I was never Italian or Latinx "enough" to others, especially within my own culture (Salinas, 2015). I attended an urban Catholic primary school and suburban public magnet secondary school which also significantly influenced my identity. How they perceived my outward identity shaped my early self-concept (Whaley & Francis, 2006).

RE-"PETE" MY NAME

It began with the colonization of my own name. I was born Pietro Antonio, but the order of nuns in my primary Catholic school were afraid I would be bullied so it changed to "Peter Anthony." I have since struggled with my own name and have often switched between the two throughout my professional career. I use my birth name as my academic publishing name in respect to my culture and heritage. My name has since become a source of great pride and respect as it reflects a cultural tradition of being named for a family member as the first-born son (Larson, 2011). Moreover, this rite of passage in naming was often overshadowed by my own developmental disabilities.

I am certain attending Catholic school and wearing a specific uniform did not assist in my development of becoming fashion forward. It also did not help that I struggled with moderate to high colorblindness (Roy, Dimigen, & Taylor, 1998). This often resulted in many average grades in art and mismatched outfits. These experiences are consistent with existing research which suggests that colorblindness is often not recognized in educational systems (Werle, 2020). However, I struggled with other disabilities as well.

One of my other physical disabilities was that I developed a severe stutter linked to levels of emotional reactivity. As a child, I often heard "re-pete" or references to my other twin "re-pete." (Werle, 2020). How I felt fluctuated my levels of fluency (St. Louis et all., 2014). Years of speech therapy and professional oration training were not quite like The King's Speech, nor did I overcome it like Winston Churchill, James Earl Jones, or Emily Blunt. Instead, it has been a battle often resulting in cognitive fatigue. Imagine every word you utter has to be planned in advance and you have to be mindful of your emotions to avoid different levels of stuttering (St. Louis et al., 2014).

To others, however, I was never colorblind or was too fluent to warrant specific educational accommodations. The educational systems I participated in did not allow specific accommodations for me. I still had to engage in my high school Spanish class, read aloud in English class, and facilitate presentations. I had an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) but it did not afford many protections or accommodations (Werle, 2020) Therefore, I rarely participated in class in middle and high school and even throughout college. I paid an oratory academic tax and was penalized for not speaking in some of my college or high school classes. I was castigated for my lack of class participation and was graded lower when I did because it was out of turn. I spoke up when I was confident I would not stutter or when I was having a "good day."

I often participated in coursework by voraciously reading and devouring any books I could get a hold of from the library. I was actually sent to the principal in Catholic school because I was reading books about the World Wars and other history books by second grade, which was deemed the "devil's work." I also won Catholic school geography and spelling competitions but not without significant struggle. These experiences identified me as a nerdy or dorky "milkman" which was common for those with a communication disorder (Werle, 2020). This was an inaccurate label to me because I never really received spectacular grades. I was a solid "B' student, as I struggled with math and often earned C grades. It was not until I began my undergraduate experience that I developed into a better student and developed a sense of belonging.

PATHWAYS TO OUR PROFESSION

Only my father attended college within my immediate family as none of my three other sisters completed college degrees. My father instilled an extraordinarily strong commitment to a blue-collar work ethic and a focus on education, which is how he escaped extreme poverty as a young man. I have often been assigned and told by colleagues the microaggression that I have an "immigrant work ethic" (Sasso & DeVitis, 2015). I attended a distinctly southern liberal arts college. It was

here that I initially affiliated with a fraternity my freshman year. I joined because I did not feel like I had ever "been enough" to anyone and I wanted to belong. My preliminary undergraduate fraternity experience was traumatic and a disaster.

I was severely hazed in that I was subjected to forced alcohol consumption, snorting grain alcohol, physical restraints, calisthenics, and even huffing human waste which are common forms of hazing according to Allen and Madden (2012). My grades dropped significantly and I disassociated from the fraternity which resulted in threats and verbal harassment when I walked around campus. I felt like a failure once again. Eventually, after conversations with a trusted campus advisor, I felt that by starting a chapter of a fraternity I would finally have the opportunity to be enough. I never knew that my father was affiliated and eventually this discovery connected me with an opportunity to found a chapter of his fraternity. He cited his fraternity experience as providing social and cultural capital as a first-generation immigrant student which is consistent with existing research (Sasso, Biddix, & Miranda Lee, 2020a).

Unbeknownst to me, many of my peers were looking for a similar sense of belonging. So, I sought to connect with my college roommates and their peers to start a fraternity. The student paper ran a story about me with a headline suggesting I was merely "looking for more friends," which invalidated my experiences and the legitimacy of the chapter I sought to construct with my peers. Despite these initial challenges and confusion, the chapter eventually began with six young men who later became my brothers.

The chapter became disruptive to the campus fraternity/sorority community because it was the first to be inclusive at this specific southern predominantly white institution (PWI). I was the only white male in the founding cohort. The reaction by others was palpable, largely falling along lines of white silence and disorientation (DiAngelo, 2011; 2018). This chapter was disruptive to the campus climate. Others felt that our chapter did not need to exist which Cabrera (2019) terms the phenomenon as white immunity because these white students were insulated from this disparate treatment and struggled to conceptualize a chapter with significant intersectional social identities. The outcome was that the campus Interfraternity Council refused to encourage our participation and recognition as a student organization and so the chapter operated sub-rosa for almost two academic years until student affairs professionals eventually intervened to support our pleas for campus recognition.

The chapter consisted of more than 40 percent Black members and several members of the LGBTQ community as cisgendered men. The chapter maintained this demographic composition for some time after I graduated, but eventually moved backwards toward integration of the student community norms. However, the chapter still featured a significant number of LGBTQ-identified students throughout its existence. Unfortunately, the chapter eventually faded into obscurity due to lack of membership. However, these experiences were formative and provided a sense of belonging when no other fraternal organizations open their doors.

I gained the experience of starting a fraternity chapter, disrupting campus culture, and providing space to those placed between the margins or among the boundaries of campus support systems which are all outcomes of activist student leaders (Stewart & Quaye, 2019). Primarily, it provided me with a sense of belonging, social capital, and leadership experiences in an environment of what Harris and Harper termed "productive masculinities." After college, I took a position with my fraternity for a year as a leadership consultant and later progressed to serve the fraternity's Executive Council as National Vice President. I developed amazing friendships and traveled the east coast starting additional chapters in a similar vein and image as my undergraduate chapter focused on creating belonging and inclusivity. I successfully oversaw the founding and chartering of five chapters.

Admittedly, there were many failures too. During my time working and volunteering for my fraternity, I also pursued graduate degrees. These experiences — coupled with guidance from specific faculty and student affairs professionals at my undergraduate institution — piqued my interest in becoming a student affairs professional. I applied to a number of graduate schools. I traveled to several "Grad Days," or, ubiquitous entrance experiences reinforced as the traditional gateway to this profession. I interviewed for approximately 25 positions. I received many inquiries for a rationale or justification that my speech impediment would not preclude me from meeting the responsibilities of the position which is unfortunately common for many college students who stutter (Misra, McKean, West, & Russo, 2000). Many also asked about my name and I remember several Super Mario or Ricky Martin references. I received several offers and turned them all down. I wanted to attend an institution where I could stretch and engage in a process of self-authorship.

Eventually, I obtained a graduate assistantship in career services and later in residence life at the downtown arts campus at the University of Rochester. I was influenced by the professional work of Monica Miranda (past AFA president) as well as Logan Hazen (Wall, Hazen, Trockel, & Markwell, 2008) and Andrew Wall (Wall, 2006; Wall, Reis,

> “In some respect, I am an accidental faculty member and researcher of happenstance.”

Bureau, 2012) with their research on promoting the fraternal movement. I was challenged to author a masters thesis and use a number of primary sources drawn from historic fraternity and sorority manuals I found in old stacks in the campus Rush Rhees library. This influenced me to pursue a PhD and many programs shut their doors to me. Old Dominion University offered me an opportunity where I worked in student leadership programs supporting the fraternity/sorority community and later in academic advising. I also served as a graduate teaching assistant, eventually leading me to pursue a more scholarly track midway through my doctoral program. I originally had a singular career direction in which I wanted to be a dean of students at a residential liberal arts college. I was influenced by the scholarship of Dennis Gregory in his fraternity/sorority research (Gregory, 2003), Alan Schwitzer in his research in supporting college student mental health (Sasso & Schwitzer, 2016), and Joseph DeVitis for his commitment to moral and social foundations (Sasso & Devitis, 2015).

By accident, I obtained two tenure track offers in a terrible job market in which did not materialize due to funding. I accepted my only tangible position at Monmouth University and started a counseling-based masters program in student affairs/college counseling which eventually led to supporting early career development of a number of current campus-based professionals in fraternity/sorority life. Eventually, I migrated west to assume another faculty position as program director of a masters program at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville near St. Louis.

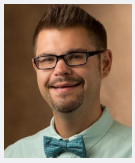
INFLUENCES OF MY RESEARCH AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

My challenges and developmental struggles are what forged my eventual need for validation in obtaining a doctoral degree. In some respect, I am an accidental faculty member and researcher of happenstance. It is my hope this narrative may inspire other professionals to engage in research and a continued path of professional development. It is my sincerest hope that this SPN is not a self-indulgent trope or diatribe. Our behavior engulfs the field and therefore, my development that influenced my professional pathway has also influenced my own research (Nash, 2019).

My own research ironically displays my own developmental experiences of high levels of social desirability and conformity in fraternity men (Sasso & Schwitzer, 2016), my approaches to joining a fraternity were rooted in compensatory masculinity (Sasso, 2015a), and a process of self-authorship of understanding my own positionality as a cisgender white male (Sasso, 2015c; 2015c). My experiences joining an inclusive fraternity that is historically Jewish influenced me to explore this college student identity and their work in resisting antisemitism (Sasso, Davis, & Hoffman, in press) as well as the First-Nation/Native American fraternal experience (Sasso, 2017). The progression as a higher education professional prompted me to explore assessment (Sasso, 2013), campus standards programs (Sasso, 2012a; 2016), and chapter advisor development (2012b). These publications and the work of others influenced me to assume my own more progressive or critical perspectives about the fraternity/sorority experience in advocating for a deeper, more intimate one (Sasso, 2012c; 2018). My future research

was greatly impacted through the production of two of the most broad, exploratory texts since the work of Gregory (2003). These texts (Sasso, 2020a; 2020b) suggest to me that we need to explore how the fraternity/sorority experience impacts an increasingly diverse student demographic with multiple identities (Abes, Jones, McEwen, 2007).

My future research will push toward recognition of students who have intersecting, more complicated identities such as my own. My invisible disabilities closed many opportunities for me (Werle, 2020) and my own ethnic identity diffusion led to some internal conflict (Whaley & Francis, 2006). The undergraduate fraternity/sorority experience provided me with social capital and a clear pathway to a profession of higher education (Sasso & DeVits, 2015). This ensured I stayed connected to the fraternal movement as a researcher. It is my intention that you consider how your own scholarly personal narrative influences you to engage in "me-search" and a self-discovery process that can be liberating (Nash, 2019). Our own biases and developmental narrative cannot be obscured in our consideration of how we approach research within the profession. We exist within the human condition and the fraternity/sorority experience espouses our greatest humanly aspirations, but its fallacies and fallibilities drive our research to improve its existence.



Pietro Sasso, Ph.D.

Author, researcher, and professor of higher education/student affairs

Dr. Pietro Sasso is a professor and researcher of the college experience, student success, and educational equity. He written and co-edited seven textbooks, authored approximately 50 scholarly publications, and facilitated over 40 conference presentations. He is a proud member of Tau Delta Phi Fraternity and was an ACPA Men and Masculinities Emerging Scholar-In-Residence. Dr. Sasso is a past recipient of the AFA Dr. Charles Eberly Oracle Award.

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50 Shades of Black:
An Interview with Danielle Ford

CHRISTINA WITKOWICKI

For this issue's feature from the AFA Research Committee, one of their members, Christina Witkowicki, is digging deeper into the research process for a scholar/practitioner in our field. She had the opportunity to talk to Danielle Ford. The following are excerpts (edited for length) from her interview with Danielle regarding her research and her advice for others:

I first met Danielle Ford when we both presented our research at the AFA Annual Meeting in 2019. Her study, 50 Shades of Black: The Black Racial Identity and Development of Black Members of White Greek Letter Organizations in the South, was by far the most discussed study during the research presentation. She is a first-generation college student who studied at Louisiana State University for both her Bachelor of Science in management, with a minor in French, and Master of Art in higher education administration.

CW: *What was the impetus for this study?*

DF: In my program, we had the opportunity to do either a thesis or take a comprehensive exam. I like to write; I like to be creative and to create things. I wanted to do something unique, so I was insistent on doing a thesis. I had quite a few different ideas, and I think the hardest thing was not the decision of whether to do a thesis, but it was the topic. You always say, "Where is there a gap? Where is there a gap in the literature?" At first, I was going to do some research around my sort of sorority, which is a multicultural sorority, because there are a lot gaps specifically around multicultural organizations. Ultimately, as a Black woman, I thought, "You know what, I really want to research Black students or Black identity." I was learning in my coursework this concept of nigrescence and the process of becoming Black. Ultimately, my study was on Black members of Panhellenic and IFC organizations at PWIs.

CW: *What excited you about this research?*

DF: I think what was the most exciting was ... Before I started, I made a casual hypothesis of what my results would be. However, I was wrong, and I was excited to be wrong. As Black people, we tend to stereotype and label other Black people when they don't fit the mold or follow what we feel is acceptable behavior. For example, Black people who might be conservative. Or Black people who don't go to HBCUs; Black people who go to PWIs, like me. Similarly, Black people who join IFC/ Panhellenic organizations versus NPHC. I'm someone who is sort of in the middle because I joined a Multi-Cultural Greek Council organization. I did hear a lot of comments from NPHC affiliated individuals that were pretty negative, you know, "Why would you choose that? You think you're ..." But at the same time, as an undergrad and immediately afterwards, when I would come across a Black person who was a member of an IFC or Panhellenic organization, there's still sometimes that negative connotation. Not purposefully, it's just that immediate sort of like, "Why? Why would they choose that organization? Did they grow up in a white setting? Did they think they're not really Black?"

CW: *We make certain assumptions.*

DF: Yes. You make those assumptions about their upbringing. Because you think, "Well, why? Why would they want to join that organization?

CW: *When there's a different option.*

DF: Exactly. My participants had to have joined an IFC/ Panhellenic group at a PWI in the South. I went to LSU, and I know what the Greek system looks like at LSU. In the South, and PWIs in the South, it's more hyper segregated than other parts of the country. So, if you are Black, if you do break that color line, it's even more apparent than if you were to join in other parts of the country. I wanted to see how being in those hyper white social settings affected or impacted their internal process of becoming Black.

I can speak for myself when I entered college. Cross talks about the different levels of nigrescence, or Blackness. I had probably a lower level of Blackness. I didn't really consider being Black to be a huge part of my identity. The older I got, the more important I placed it in my life. The stronger of a Black identity I had. So, I hypothesized my participants would have low nigrescence and would end low years later. However, for most of my participants, it was the complete opposite! Eight of my 10 participants were alumni, which was purposeful because I wanted them to be able to reflect on their college experience. When they reflected, most felt as an adult, they have a higher level of Blackness than before they joined their organizations. They felt a lot of the negative experiences they've had with both Black and white people forced them to defend their Blackness, and to really help redefine what it means to be Black. I thought that, for me, that was the most impactful, and interesting, part of the research.

CW: *What was your biggest takeaway from the project?*

DF: Biggest takeaway is that I think more master's level students can do research. It's not just for the Ph.D. level or the doctorate level. Master's level students can create important stuff and make some impact in the academy. Now, whether people respect it, because you don't have the three extra letters next to your name, that's another thing; however, I feel that shouldn't stop you from trying. I feel like more master's programs should encourage their students to do theses.

CW: *What is one piece of advice you would offer to someone interested in researching a topic but don't know where to start?*

DF: I'd say for anyone interested in doing research, just make sure it is a topic you are interested in, you are passionate about, and you find fascinating. Make sure it is a topic you will not get tired reading about. You must live, breathe, and eat the topic. You must be constantly looking for every single study, article, or quote, that even begins to mention or breathe your topic. So, if it is something you can see yourself getting bored of, then do not choose that topic. That's what kept me from giving up. I was just really interested, so I wanted to keep going.

CW: *Anything else that I didn't ask about that you think would be helpful?*

DF: I would say ... just do it. Especially for some folks who may not see themselves in research, I think those are the folks specifically who really do need to do the research.

I remember in grad school, reading articles — we talked so much in class about student development theory, and yes, it's based on college aged white men. But, why can't we redo the theory? So, it starts with women. It starts with people of color creating research. It starts with us. If we don't see ourselves in it, we have to continue to push the envelope and create it. We have to keep creating it until there is no longer that gap.

Dr. Christina Witkowicki

LaunchPoint

Consultant

Dr. Christina Witkowicki served 14 years as a campus-based professional before moving to her role within LaunchPoint. As a consultant working with multiple fraternal organizations and campuses, Dr. Witkowicki brings a unique perspective and a data-driven mindset to assist in challenging projects.

Danielle Ford

Interfraternal Volunteer & Member of Sigma Lambda Gamma National Sorority, Inc.

Danielle Ford earned her Bachelor of Science in management, with a minor in French, and Master of Art in higher education administration from Louisiana State University. Danielle enjoys living in Dallas/Fort Worth with her cat Sasha, and she is currently exploring future career and academic opportunities.

COMPETENCY

SPOTLIGHT

This is the second installment of a regular short feature that aims to dive more deeply into the AFA Core Competencies. In each issue, this feature is developed in collaboration with the AFA Professional Development Committee to assist association members in applying the Core Competencies within their professional development. Each installment focuses on one competency and provides specific and tangible examples of how to apply the competency to enhance one's development.

NAVIGATING COMPLEXITY DURING UNCERTAIN TIMES

This year (2020) has required fraternity/sorority professionals to navigate a series of complex and uncertain situations. Fortunately, most AFA members are prepared for this: more than 74 percent rate themselves as Level 3 (practicing) or Level 4 (proficiency) in the three competencies that make up the area titled "Navigating Complexity."

Although AFA Core Competencies self-assessment data shows we maintain the skills to navigate complexity, how do we translate those skills into practice … especially in difficult moments when they're needed most?

In response to this, Chris Jefferson, director for the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life at Pennsylvania State University, noted sorority/fraternity professionals are well-versed in navigating complexity due to the regularity of considering a broad constituency in decision making. Specifically he said, "Compartmentalization, prioritization, and recognition of when other experts need to weigh in will be important tactics to aid professionals during these challenging times."

Jess Turuc, director of fraternity and sorority life at the University of Utah, also weighed in on this question. Jess referenced the quote "If you stay ready, you never have to get prepared," and spoke to how professionals in fraternity/sorority affairs regularly address difficult conversations and topics, but rarely when there is no end in sight. Despite this, Jess said, "I believe fraternity/sorority professionals are uniquely positioned to handle this current situation because we 'stay ready' through both professional development opportunities and the deep and supportive relationships we have with others in the industry. As a result, we are always ready to address complex situations."

COMPETENCY:

Navigating Complexity

Description:

Supporting collegiate fraternal organizations involves multiple functional areas and complex issues that have multiple causes and contributors with no perfect or obvious solutions. Fraternity/sorority professionals must be able to acknowledge, navigate, make quality decisions, and lead through these complex issues. This includes:

- Embracing complexity: Including seeing the big picture, recognizing multiple influences and their interdependencies, accepting conflicting information, avoiding over-simplifying situations, and acknowledging the limits of one's knowledge and abilities. Note: This falls fourth in the top 10 self-rated competencies among AFA members.
- Thinking critically about situations: Including avoiding personal bias, collecting multiple perspectives, searching for conflicting evidence, considering multiple and counterintuitive strategies, consulting research, theory, and good practice, identifying sources of leverage, evaluating intended and unintended consequences, and realistically anticipating long-term impact of decisions. Note: This falls third in the top 10 self-rated competencies among AFA members.
- Making decisions in complex situations: Including determining priorities for decision-making, identifying sources of leverage, implementing others' ideas, eliminating low-impact options, eliminating one's own ideas, recognizing the limits of one's influence, overcoming analysis paralysis, establishing support, acting with incomplete information, and relying on collaboration and interdependencies. Note: This falls tenth in the top 10 self-rated competencies among AFA members.

Application:

Use Design Thinking to Embrace Complexity

Design Thinking is an iterative process that helps users create new ways of thinking to solve problems through 5 key components:

- Empathize with your users or those you're serving;
- Define their needs, their problem, and your insights;
- Ideate by challenging assumptions and creating ideas for innovative solutions;
- Prototype to start creating the solution; and
- Test the solutions.

These components should not be viewed in a step-by-step process, but as a high level view of phases to spark innovation. Use design thinking to embrace complexity by thinking outside of the box when typical or rigid norms may inhibit your ability to move forward.

Reflection Questions: *When do you find yourself struggling to be creative or embrace complexity? How could your work benefit from utilizing a new way of thinking?*

Examine Your Biases

All humans subconsciously develop biases and if not addressed, these biases can have serious and negative ramifications on our work. To best serve students, members, coworkers, and stakeholders, it is essential to address implicit biases. In practice, this looks like inviting different voices to the table, expanding the literature utilized for programs, and speaking out when microaggressions or incidents of bias occur, amongst many others. When we recognize our individual biases and expand our perspectives it allows us to better understand complex issues, think critically, and develop quality solutions to enhance the fraternal experience. To learn more about addressing implicit biases check out this article from the Association of College & Research Libraries.

Leveraging Partnerships for Success

As we strive to move the needle, we must understand and leverage the different perspectives of stakeholders. We should utilize this time to build new relationships, especially outside those with whom we may typically work. Headquarters staff, vendors, campus based professionals, volunteers, other college/university staff members, and subject matter experts all bring unique lived experiences that when combined, offer the greatest opportunity to navigate complex situations. No one person or position has all the answers, but by coming together in partnership we can utilize the individual strengths of the collective whole to better position ourselves to handle anything that comes our way.

Reflection Questions: *What individuals have you leveraged partnerships with in the last quarter? What percentage of those were new partnerships? What new relationship do you want to build in the next quarter? How do you hope to leverage that partnership for success?*

Overcoming Analysis Paralysis

In a world where the answer to almost every question can be found through a Google search, we can still find ourselves trapped in a state of indecisiveness. It can seem like there are thousands of options when trying to find a solution to a problem. We may find ourselves overthinking each option or striving to find the perfect solution. Doing so can place us in moments of paralysis where we are unable to move forward with any choice. It is essential to strategize and practice ways to become more definitive and prompt when navigating complexities.

Reflection Questions: *Do you find yourself needing to overcome analysis paralysis? Utilize resources to implement new strategies and advance your ability to navigate complexity.*

Put Project Management into Practice

Use your project management skills — breaking large projects or deliverables into manageable steps — especially when there is a need for collaboration. When you employ project management, it's important to have all collaborators on the same page, roles clearly established, benchmark deadlines (or milestones), and for individuals to know how and where to communicate progress.

In times where there is a need to adapt quickly or deliver projects on tighter timelines, teams can explore an agile project management process which is more iterative in nature than classic project management approaches. There are also several tools available online to assist with developing and managing projects in a virtual workspace.

Next Steps: Research the project management process and put it into practice. Identify a project management tool that may benefit you and try using this process to navigate through your next project.

ADVICE FROM A COLLEAGUE: SIMPLIFY AND ENGAGE OTHERS

Allison Swick-Duttine
SUNY Plattsburgh
Director of Fraternity/Sorority Life and Project HELP

As a young professional, a mentor introduced me to a book by Margaret J. Wheatley called "Turning to One Another: Simple Conversations to Restore Hope to the Future." There are some fundamental lessons in the book about navigating complexity I have adopted as my professional philosophy and three core concepts I return to in times of uncertainty.

> *"Once a simple process becomes a technique, it can only grow more complex and difficult. It never becomes simpler. It becomes the specialized knowledge of a few experts, and everyone else becomes dependent on them."* (p. 24)

Humans have a tendency to overthink. We jump into action, so we feel like we are making progress but never dig for the root cause of a problem. We develop elaborate processes and programs that are difficult to sustain, resource-intensive, and don't have any effect on changing the outcome. Whenever I face a complex problem, I remind myself that simple is always better.

> *"Conversation is the natural way humans think together. Expect it to be messy at times."* (p. 36)

I admit I get frustrated by meetings where we talk and talk but get nowhere. However, I know I cannot solve complex problems on my own. Without the contribution of students, volunteers, and other colleagues, any solution I develop will likely not sustain. We must use the brainpower (and buy in) of others who care about the same things we do. "Messy" conversations often lead to powerful solutions, so one of the first things I do when trying to problem solve is convene a group of people who have a vested interest in the solution. I also often pick up the phone and call a colleague to process my thoughts out loud and seek their feedback.

> *"As we work together to restore hope to the future, we need to include a new and strange ally — our willingness to be disturbed. Our willingness to have our beliefs and ideas challenged by what others think. No one perspective can give us the answers we need to the problems of today. Paradoxically, we can only find those answers by admitting that we don't know. We have to be willing to let go of our certainty and expect ourselves to be confused for a time."* (p. 38)

I have learned in my 22 professional years it is okay to not immediately know the answer. Usually walking away from the problem for a bit allows my subconscious to chew on solutions. I have also learned not to react immediately when someone says something I disagree with. I have learned so much about myself and what I value and believe, and I have even changed my opinions and approaches as a result.

Next Steps for Further Exploration:

Looking for additional opportunities to put this competency to work? Complete these two take-home assignments to help you better navigate complexity.

1. Complete Implicit Association Tests (IAT) through Project Implicit. Project Implicit is a non-profit organization with the goal to educate the public about hidden biases. The organization provides several tests including but not limited to race, religion, gender and gender identity, age, etc.

2. Utilize case studies to simulate navigating complex situations. Include opportunities to role play and better understand different stakeholder perspectives. Challenge your team members to take a role that is not typical to them and process how the decision making process may be different based on that role. You can also incorporate design thinking and project management concepts and practice opportunities into the case studies.

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WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND?

This is the second part of a deep dive into the Core Competencies. We want to hear your suggestions about what element of the Core Competencies you would like to learn more about in future issues.

Email Dan Wrona, chair of the Professional Development Committee (dan@risepartnerships.com), or *Perspectives* co-editors Ryan Miller (rdm9493@gmail.com) and Tyler Havens (tyler.f.havens@gmail.com) with suggestions.

YOUNG GIFTED & BLACK

Career, Professional Development, & Black Greek-lettered Organizations at a Historically-Black College/University

GREG SHIRLEY

I am a member of what some consider the "Talented Tenth;" an African American, college educated, gay man affiliated with a Black Greek lettered organization (BGLO). I have taken this consideration with me wherever I go, including the classroom, conference room, and my career. As I interact with colleagues, students, alumni, employers, and the greater community, I rely on my experience in two areas: being a fraternity man and being a career professional who works in a career center at a university campus. My affiliation with Alpha Phi Alpha, the oldest historically Black fraternity for college-educated men, founded at the predominantly white institution, Cornell University, has been closely tied to my identity. In fact, I carried this with me as I applied for my first position at my alma mater, Paul Quinn College (PQC). Paul Quinn is a small, private, liberal arts institution with roots in Austin, Waco, and Dallas, respectively. It is also the oldest historically Black college west of the Mississippi River, founded in 1872 by a small circuit of African Methodist Episcopal (AME) preachers.

For the majority of my 13 year career in high education, I have worked in the functional area of career development. I have had the privilege of being a practitioner of career development on both sides of the aisle — as a career coach/consultant (meeting with students and alumni for career and professional development success) and now as associate director for employer relations, technology, and operations at Texas Woman's University (TWU). I am at my fifth institution doing what I love — providing guidance to college students on how to make a strong first impression with employers. I hold a special place in my work, and my heart, for students affiliated with sororities and fraternities, as they are often challenged with articulating their transferable skills when seeking internships and entry-level positions.

During my time in a career development role, I have also realized the contrast, in many cases, in the breadth and depth of services provided in a career center at an HBCU compared to a predominantly white institution (PWI). That observation informs this article's focus on the following:

- What HBCUs should consider when providing career and professional development services to their students, and
- What offices that focus on recruiting and retaining students in fraternal organizations can do to partner with their career centers to help those affiliated at HBCUs become more career-ready.

This article does not seek to criticize or demean one who pursues an education at an HBCU. As with many PWIs, there are HBCUs that do an amazing job educating their students and providing career and professional development assistance. However, as mentioned above, no institution of higher education is perfect, and my hope is to use this as a conversation starter so institutions can best serve their students and prepare them for the professional world.

I have attended many conferences, heard many presentations, and spoken with plenty of employers who share concerns that this generation of college students assume they're ready to work and have the skills necessary to excel, but they're not as prepared as they believe. Fraternity and sorority life (FSL) offices at HBCUs can use this as an opportunity to work at a more intentional level with their career center partners across the aisle if it isn't already happening. While career centers are the knowledge-keepers of career and professional development, it is the responsibility of everyone at an institution of higher education to help a student in their career development success.

My time in undergrad in my fraternity at Paul Quinn provided amazing career and professional development opportunities; however, I was not aware the experiences I engaged in could be considered career development at the time. The career services provided to me as a student were more secondary in nature, as there was more emphasis placed on leadership opportunities or "traditions" (such as Homecoming festivities, sports, and welcome week activities). In fact, I could not describe what we had in the way of a career center as an actual center.

According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), the median number of students to one professional staff member is 1,800. When I was a student, there were approximately 1,000 students enrolled and one to two professional staff members providing career services, one of which was the dean of students. On the surface, we were staffed appropriately, but the traditional services offered to students at a career center such as resume reviews, mock interviews, or career assessments were not readily available to students. This is commonplace at many small HBCUs, as well as small PWIs, given the staff size is small, individuals often wear many hats, and/or the institution in question does not feel a need to fully staff or fully fund a career center.

What we lacked in traditional structure was indirectly made up for in opportunities to attend leadership conferences either created and sponsored by HBCUs for HBCU students, such as the National Association of Student Affairs Professionals (NASAP) conference, or as with the Southwestern Black Student Leadership Conference (SBSLC) at Texas A&M, formed at a PWI and led by African-American students. As heavily involved students — often affiliated in one of the Divine Nine BGLOs, motivated by staff at Paul Quinn and other smaller HBCUs — we used these conferences as opportunities to network and learn more about the transferable skills needed to succeed in and outside of school.

The NACE has a list of core competencies, or marketable, power, or essential skills, that includes: critical thinking/problem solving, oral/written communication, teamwork/collaboration, digital technology, leadership, professionalism/work ethic, career management, and global/intercultural fluency. It is these skills that many students, when asked, feel they possess, when in reality, they are not as skilled as they assume. Employers seek these skills in new college graduates — skills that institutions of higher education overall are having a challenging time incorporating in many classes. This is where fraternity and sorority life offices and career centers come in.

At their inception, the necessity of the HBCU was to train newly-freed slaves to learn trade and professional skills. The founding of the majority of the 101 HBCUs were either through churches or the second Morrill Land Act (1890). While institutions provide excellent liberal arts training and co-curricular activities to students, many career centers (particularly at smaller, private HBCUs) are, at best, providing some level of placement services. This is an aspect of the career services offices of 30 years ago that doesn't align with the mission of a career development center that aims to focus on the holistic student and equip them to take ownership of their own career path. This must be addressed if students are to remain competitive with their peers at predominantly white institutions.

As with many who join a fraternity or sorority, the camaraderie gained from membership is matched by the ability to network. If done well, a member can utilize that network to increase their professional circle. In fact, that is one of the selling pieces for membership — a vast alumni network that reaches into virtually every industry, readily available to access should a member move to a new city or want to break into a career.

I can reference my twin brother as an example. A member of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Incorporated, during his time in undergrad, he was elected to serve as the third and second national vice president of the National Pan-Hellenic Council, the governing body for BGLOs. While serving in these voluntary roles, he was able to network with fraternity and sorority members across the nation. This passion stayed with him when we attended graduate school, where he became a graduate assistant working with fraternity and sorority chapters. Fast forward 20 years, and his career includes working as the inaugural director for fraternity and sorority life at two institutions and an inaugural assistant dean at a Big 12 university. Often, he is the first director of color in his role within fraternity and sorority life at various institutions, of which is rare across the United States.

I mention my twin brother and his circumstances because, unlike members of predominantly white fraternities and sororities, his story is the exception, not the rule. This is what I appreciate about career development at an HBCU; while the opportunities may not always come directly from a fully-staffed and structured career center, faculty and staff are indirectly the pipeline to opportunities when they're available.

As previously mentioned, there are two action items historically Black colleges and universities can take to provide more comprehensive and fulfilling career and professional development to students.

First, invest in the career and professional development of students.

If your institution can provide increased funding to its career center and pour into its staff, that's a start. Functional teams that focus on career consulting/counseling and can facilitate employer outreach, partnered with a career management system where students can find internships, part-time positions, and full-time careers, led by a director with a vision who understands the power of assessment and data, can work wonders. I tell students their ultimate goal when coming to college is to graduate and find a career that suits them. A well-equipped career center can help with that.

If this isn't possible, ensure faculty and staff are invested in the development of students. Career centers are the keepers of knowledge, but a student's holistic career development is everyone's responsibility.

Second, as a fraternity/sorority professional, consider partnering with the career center to provide intentional programming to assist in the skill development of students.

While at the University of Texas at Arlington and Texas A&M University-Commerce, I often provided programming for the fraternity and sorority community at retreats centered on the NACE Core Competencies. Students involved with fraternities and sororities often have the skills — they just need to know they have them and how to articulate them on a resume or in an interview. If your department has student learning outcomes that deal with professional development, partner with the career center and talk about intentional programming that discusses transferable skills and other career-related topics.

This article only scratches the surface of what can be done, and hopefully provides ideas on what you, as a fraternity/sorority professional or volunteer, can do to support the career development of affiliated students at an HBCU or a PWI.

Greg Shirley, Ed.D.
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Associate Director for Employer Relations, Technology, and Operations

Dr. Greg Shirley, II serves as associate director for employer relations, technology, and operations at the Texas Woman's University Career Connections Center. A higher education professional for 13 years, Greg's passion lies in the career and professional development of students, particularly those in special populations (BIPOC, LGBTQ, first-generation, students with disabilities, non-traditional students, etc.). Greg was initiated into Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. in the fall of 2002 at Paul Quinn College, and is eager to speak with his sisters and brothers in sorority and fraternity life as to how their affiliations are intricately tied to their career and professional development and occupational trajectory.

TITLE IX: NEW REGULATION KEY POINTS

In May 2020, the Department of Education (DOE) released the final regulations on Title IX and these regulations went into effect on August 14, 2020. Leading up to the changes, AFA hosted an AdvanceU program and invited Peter Lake to discuss how fraternities and sororities might be impacted. Thanks to the information and content he shared, the editorial team has put together a recap of key points and findings for the readership.

Key Point 1: The creation of a federally mandated college "court" system.

Although the DOE does not use the terminology "college court," the system outlined within the Title IX regulations essentially operates as a court. This "court" is narrow in focus as the jurisdiction is limited to sexual harassment as defined in the new regulations. Generally, sex crimes are managed at a state level, and this new regulation allows for offenses to be addressed as non-criminal offenses at a local, institutional level. Terminology within the system is legalistic and resembles a court in that those who file complaints are "complainants," and the people who respond to the complaints are "respondents."

The new regulations also narrow the class of mandated reporters, and no longer refer to "responsible employees."

Key Point 2: Actual knowledge — not constructive knowledge — triggers institutional response requirements.

The new regulations jettison constructive knowledge requirements in favor of an actual knowledge trigger for institutional response. In many situations, an institution will only have actual notice of sexual harassment upon the filing of a formal complaint, which must be signed. The new regulations presume those accused of sexual harassment are not responsible until the conclusion of the grievance process, which includes an investigation, live hearing with cross-examination, and final decision-making by a decision-maker or hearing panel.

In 2011, the guidance used the constructive and actual knowledge standards, which required institutions to respond to sexual harassment in many instances that they will no longer be required to do so. There may be a reduction in reports made to Title IX systems.

Key Point 3: There is a new definition of sexual harassment.

The new definition indicates:

"Sexual harassment means conduct on the basis of sex that satisfies one or more of the following:

(1) An employee of the recipient conditioning the provision of an aid, benefit, or service of the recipient on an individual's participation in unwelcome sexual conduct;

(2) Unwelcome conduct determined by a reasonable person to be so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive that it effectively denies a person equal access to the recipient's education program or activity; or

(3) "Sexual assault" as defined in 20 U.S.C. 1092(f)(6)(A)(v), "dating violence" as defined in 34 U.S.C. 12291(a)(10), "domestic violence" as defined in 34 U.S.C. 12291(a)(8), or "stalking" as defined in 34 U.S.C. 12291(a)(30)."

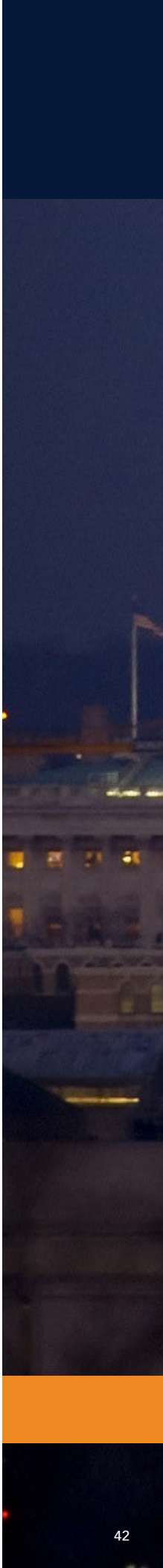
This new definition, at the core, is a rewrite of other standards. The new definition may create confusion about what sexual harassment is and legal battles will occur in trying to overcome that confusion. One such confusion may come in defining "quid pro quo" as a form of sexual harassment and incorporating the Clery Act standards in part (3) into Title IX.

Additionally, the new definition requires many institutions, especially federally funded schools, to redefine what sexual harassment is on their campuses because, if they don't, they will risk regulatory intervention.

Key Point 4: The new regulations require cross-examinations to be done by advisors.

Per the new Title IX regulations, institutions will need to allow cross examinations by advisors, and only advisors. Many schools are sorting through various questions such as: Where do these advisors come from? How will they be trained? How will they be managed? Will our institution need the equivalent of a public defender office?

Because of this new format, the roles of the advocates will evolve. Within fraternity/sorority life, advocates may need to be trained to assist members in protecting their rights and interests. Just like in a criminal justice system, having a trained and knowledgeable advocate may significantly impact the quality of an outcome for an individual complainant or respondent.
Live cross-examination requirements concern many survivors' advocates. Advocates see the new regulations as potentially "triggering" or retraumatizing for victims, and they worry it will become harder for student survivors to come forward. Respondents' advocates may raise concerns that the new "court" will use a much lower standard of proof than criminal court and deprives a respondent of the opportunity to conduct their own cross-examination.



Key Point 5: The new regulations may require additional resources.

One issue institutions face — especially small colleges and universities — is staffing the new mandated system. As in the past, institutions must still designate a Title IX coordinator, who must be an employee of the institution. Other functions such as investigation, decision-making, and hearing appeals are required. While the Title IX coordinator may serve as the investigator, a separate decision-maker and a separate appellate officer are required. Some campuses are choosing to outsource the investigative function, the decision-making function, or both.

Key Point 6: There is a new definition of education, program, or activity.

The new definition indicates:

> *"Education, program, or activity includes locations, events, or circumstances over which the recipient exercised substantial control over both the respondent and the context in which the sexual harassment occurs, and also includes any building owned or controlled by a student organization that is officially recognized by a postsecondary institution."*

This updated definition creates two dimensions to education, programs, or activities. One, the recipient exercises substantial control over the respondent and context of the harassment. Two, the recipient exercises control over any recognized institutional organization. The latter requirement in particular directly implicates many fraternities and sororities, which should expect expanded Title IX enforcement directly related to fraternal organizations. Relationship agreements are likely to see some modifications as well.

Interested in learning more about these new regulations and potential implications for fraternity and sorority life? View the AdvanceU program and additional resources Lake provided during the program here.

This article was adapted from an AdvanceU program with Peter Lake, professor of law, Charles A. Dana chair, director of the Center for Excellence in Higher Education Law and Policy at Stetson University College of Law, and senior higher education consulting attorney with Steptoe & Johnson, PLLC.

from Perspectives to practice

On average, American adults process 34 gigabytes (more than 100,000 words) of information daily. Our lives are flooded with Google searches, YouTube videos, Facebook and Twitter posts, and a never-ending feed of suggested reading, watching, and listening. Media consumption is a constant task — conscious and subconscious — to separate the trivial from the significant, fact from opinion, process new information, and discern meaning.

Perspectives provides a forum for ideas, opinions, and experiences that is thought-provoking and innovative; shares new information; highlights best practices; and challenges thought. As a quarterly publication, we recognize Perspectives is a microscopic part of your general — and professional — information consumption reality. We want to ensure the content published in Perspectives is communicated, positioned, and promoted in a way to maximize impact by encouraging continued discussion and informing practical application.

"From Perspectives to Practice" aims to provide a guide for learning through a focus on continued discussion, engagement, and action. You'll find this section at the end of each issue. We hope it helps you critically examine the viewpoints offered, make meaning of the content, and identify ways for further engagement through applying the ideas in these pages to your everyday practice.

MAKING THE MOST OF THIS PUBLICATION

1. Engage with the content : Read the article more than once, and as you are reading, do the following:

- Identify one important concept, research finding, theory, or idea you learned.
- Determine why you identified that piece of information as important.
- Apply what you learned from the article to some aspect of your work.
- Take it a step further: What question(s) does the article raise for you? What are you still wondering about? What do you agree or disagree with?

2. Reflect : What stood out to you in each article? What new information was presented? Did you experience any "aha" moments?

3. Share & Discuss : Take those highlights and insights and discuss them with friends. Share them with stakeholders. Create an idea pipeline and see how the concept(s) evolve.

4. Write About It : Did something resonate with you? Frustrate you? Did reflection lead to brilliance? Put those thoughts into words and add your own viewpoints to the discussion.

5. Put it into practice : What is a key takeaway that can inform your work? How can you take that information and apply it? What is realistic? What is a longer term goal?

**Adapted from the 2017 Unmistakable Creative post, "A Quick and Effective Guide to Remember and Apply What You Read."*

Continued Discussion:

Vital Voices: A Raw Look at Graduate Student Perspectives

Discussion Question: How can hiring managers shift their evaluation to take the impact of COVID-19 on the Graduate Assistantship experience into consideration? What can job candidates do to demonstrate desired competencies through their current work functions?

Discussion Question: Does this moment give us reason to take pause and reconsider the experiences that are valued for entry level professionals and the manner in which we evaluate talent? How might current hiring practices and norms restrict access into fraternity and sorority advising, and how might this cause us to miss out on some talent?

You About to Lose Yo Job

Discussion Question: The authors reference Padilla's (1994) notion of "cultural taxation," wherein non-white professionals are determined to be best suited for specific responsibilities on the basis of their race or ethnicity. In what ways have you seen this play out at your home institution? What are strategies to be more intentional in how culturally-based responsibilities, committee service, student-advising, etc., are more equitably distributed?

Discussion Question: Sirleaf & Grayson pose excellent considerations for further preparation of graduate assistants, including considering how to really be prepared for advising councils different from their own personal experiences, including doing their homework on organizations' historical background, unique place in the fraternal movement, and daily struggles. Are we prepared to address systemic racism within the fraternity and sorority functional area? What committees, projects, or tasks could graduate assistants take part in to broaden their scope in a meaningful and equitable way?

Discussion Question: Moving past the "traditional" student development theories is increasingly important. Students are individuals with many identities, some of which they are just learning about for the first time while in college. What theories of identity development (racial, cultural, etc.,) could aid professionals in meeting students where they are?

We Can Do Hard Things

Discussion Question: Do you have any personal examples of self exploration or personal accomplishment that have impacted your development and growth? How have you reflected upon and learned from those experiences this year?

Discussion Question: How can we foster a work environment that fosters both the personal and professional wellness of an employee? What could an employer provide to support one's journey in finding their personal niche, professional fulfilment, and healthy balance? As a fellow employee how could you encourage this in your coworkers?

Never Quite (dis)Abled: Influences on My Research on Fraternity and Sorority Experiences

Discussion Question: The author identifies cultural and family influences, coupled with personal and academic experiences, that shape key decisions in their academic pathway and ultimately influence their scholarly work. Reflect upon key aspects of your background and experiences that might have influenced both your career decisions as well as scholarly interests.

Discussion Question: Why is it important to investigate the impetus for our own research interests? How can this self awareness ultimately make you a better scholar?

Young, Gifted, & Black: Career, Professional Development, & Black Greek-lettered Organizations at a Historically-Black College/University

Discussion Question: The author identifies a list of core competencies developed by the National Association of Colleges and Employers. What are some experiences within fraternity and sorority life that could facilitate the development of these competencies? How can you support these experiences through your work?

Discussion Question: How can a fraternity or sorority experience enable students to have access to career development networks and resources that they might not otherwise have the resources to access? The author identifies the impact fraternity and sorority experiences can have in this regard at HBCUs, how might this inform practices at PWIs that could enhance career development access for students?

Title IX: New Regulation Key Points

Discussion Question: How do the new regulations and guidance differ from existing practices in your department or at your institution? What campus partners do you need to connect with to address any discrepancies?

Discussion Question: In the time since the new regulations have gone into effect have you noticed an impact on campus operations or student outcomes?

Continued Engagement:

Read the following Essentials and Oracle: The Research Journal of the Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors articles that relate to topics discussed in this issue:

- April 2020 Essentials: "COVID-19 & Cultural Biases: A Cultural Competency Quick Guide" by Phillips Thomas Hornbuckle, J.D.
- February 2020 Essentials: "Dismantling Systemic Organizational Oppression: Making Institutional Commitment to Culturally Based Fraternities & Sororities at Predominantly White Institutions" by Travis L. Martin, Ph.D., & Keith Garcia
- October 2019 Essentials: "Beyond the Numbers: Navigating the Enrollment Decline" by Corry Smith
- November 2019 Essentials: "Daily Oopsies & the Cycle of Failure" by Dr. Kate Steiner & Dan Faill
- Oracle: The Research Journal of the Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors, Volume 14, Issue 2, Winter 2019: "Joining In, Blowing the Whistle, or Intervening: Examining the Effects of Severity and Organizational Identification on Fraternity/Sorority Members' Responses to Hazing"
- Oracle: The Research Journal of the Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors, Volume 13, Issue 2, Fall 2018: "Tweeting in Greek: How National Fraternities & Sororities Use Twitter"

Check out the following books, articles, podcasts, or videos/shows that can enhance discussion of topics in this issue:

- Revisit some theoretical foundations by reviewing Rethinking College Student Development Theory Using Critical Frameworks by Abes, Jones, and Stewart.
- Explore some practical scenarios in Case Studies for Student Development Theory: Advancing Social Justice and Inclusion in Higher Education by Garvey, Harris, Means, Perez, and Porter.

Ongoing personal and professional development opportunities tied to this issue theme:

- Revisit your "AFA Core Competencies Self Assessment" results and reflect upon how they intersect with this issue's regular short feature on applying the Core Competencies in daily work
- Check out resources provided by the National Museum of African American History & Culture on talking about race
- Share your office, organization, or company's plan for navigating COVID-19 during the 2020 - 2021 academic year and beyond and view responses from other AFA members here.

Continued Action:

Read or consider contributing to upcoming editions of Essentials and Oracle.

Select an article to discuss at an upcoming staff or division meeting, council meeting, with students, etc. — use it as a discussion topic to kick off the meeting and then share the conversation's outcome with the hashtag #AFAPerspectives.

Review the Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors Core Competencies and identify ways the content relates or doesn't relate — how can you use the information gained to continue to build your professional competence?

Circulate an article that resonates with stakeholders based on your campus, organization, vendor, or company's circumstances.

Look outside of the industry — what concepts relate, challenge, or inform our thinking and practice? Who else can we learn from?

Reflect and write for a future issue: Email rdm9493@gmail.com or tyler.f.havens@gmail.com with questions, article ideas and submissions.

Stay curious: Ask questions, challenge ideas, and see how this content can spark ongoing thought and practice.